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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines how stakeholders in an Appalachian Kentucky high school addressed educational problems that they targeted for reform. Set against the backdrop of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA), this ethnographic study describes the challenges of effectively coupling top-down state mandates with bottom-up advocacy and engagement, and the multiple and often conflicting ways in which reform became real in one community's life. Prominent in the local response to KERA was resistance to state-mandated policies. Resistance fueled state threats of punitive action to encourage compliance, but paradoxically, these threats engendered greater resiliency among stakeholders to make the high school reflect local priorities and ways of working together. Drawing on over a year of participant observation at "Central High School" and extensive interviews in school and community, the research examines six interwoven themes critical for understanding local paradigms and paradoxes: (1) desire for local control and "taking care of our own," but also ways in which local vested interests undermined more equitable means of taking care of all students; (2) ideal of "solving things face to face," contrasted with power differentials based on family name, wealth, race, and gender; (3) respect for the contributions and opinions of less educated stakeholders; (4) use of statistics to legitimize stakeholder interests and authority; (5) sharing or withholding information and effects on the change process; and (6) metaphors of the mountains reflecting strong local connection to place and progeny. Contains 20 references. Appendices include an extensive personal narrative on doing ethnography, sample informed-consent forms, and data collection instruments. (Author/SV)

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ED 408 121

MOVING MOUNTAINS:
REFORM, RESISTANCE, AND RESILIENCY
IN AN APPALACHIAN KENTUCKY HIGH SCHOOL

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
AND THE COMMITTEE ON GRADUATE STUDIES
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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Maureen K. Porter
November, 1996

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation addresses the question of how stakeholders in an Appalachian Kentucky high school addressed the educational problems that they targeted for reform. Set against the backdrop of the controversial Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 (KERA), this ethnographic investigation describes the challenges of effectively coupling top-down state mandates with bottom-up advocacy and engagement. Drawing on over a year of participant observation at "Central High School," the research examines six connecting themes that are critical for understanding local paradigms and enduring paradoxes. This work highlights the multiple and often conflicting ways in which reform became real in the life of one community. Prominent in the local response was resistance to the priorities and policies set forth by the state. This resistance fueled the state's threats to take punitive intervention to encourage compliance with the standardized goals of the Reform Act. But these threats, paradoxically, encouraged greater resiliency on the part of Hickory County stakeholders to make the high school reflect their own priorities and ways of working together. This research concludes by pointing to ways in which reform, resistance, and resiliency were entwined in this rural venue. Throughout the accounts, I draw on metaphors of the mountains to illustrate the strong local connection to both place and progeny. In this way, this work contributes novel dimensions that can serve as the basis for a concretely grounded ethic of rural renewal.

Knowledge itself is power.

- Sir Francis Bacon

Reform is like moving mountains. It's one grain of sand by one grain of sand. You have to take the problems one at a time.

- educator in Hickory County, Kentucky

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INTRODUCTION

The Challenge of Systemic Reform

On April 11, 1990, the Kentucky Education Reform Act, or "KERA" as it is colloquially called, broke prominently upon the national scene as one of the most comprehensive reforms attempted by any state. In the six years since KERA's passage, Kentucky has emerged as a national leader in state-mandated comprehensive school reform. This trend only promises to gain momentum with the recent federal push to eliminate the Department of Education altogether and to devolve ever greater power and authority to the states.

KERA's passage heralded what was to be labeled the "third wave" of reform (Smith and O'Day, 1990). This distinguishes itself from previous waves of reform in its integrated or "systemic" approach to using centralized resources and authority to create a more decentralized system of common schools. In the Reform Act, local schools would be held accountable for meeting higher standards of student achievement, but would also be given greater degrees of autonomy and flexibility to achieve standardized ends.

In order to be successful, systemic reform as exemplified in KERA requires the effective coupling of top-down state mandates with bottom-up local engagement. Thus, one of the major emphases in KERA is the cultivation of local stakeholders who have the capacity to engage in public discourse - and action - related to the purposes and policies of their schools. To these ends, several of the major initiatives in KERA are aimed at creating more democratic decision-making structures. Teacher-administrator committees, site-based councils, and citizens' superintendent screening committees are three of the most important of these bodies. They are intended to give formal authority to local people working directly in schools.

While policies may be written at a state level, *reform* is radically local. At the basic level of the school, negotiations about proposed changes are enmeshed in local webs of personal relationships, power hierarchies, and long-standing paradoxes about the very meaning of education itself. These webs have repeatedly ensnared those state officials who, expecting to see systemic reform progress in a rational, impersonal manner, misjudged how strong local cultural frames of reference can be. Reformers need to more effectively understand the role that these resilient strands of culture play in framing the local debates. For they are fundamentally important to understanding how much is at stake in adopting the KERA reforms and hence, why there can be so much local resistance.

The southeastern, Appalachian part of Kentucky presents a particularly challenging and fundamentally important place to look at the many shades of KERA implementation. Long a set of school systems that have resisted attempts at centralized reforms, these schools have entered a new era of accountability to external authorities at the same time that they have been granted greater autonomy. Whether this uneasy mix of decentralization with centralization can contribute to greater local ownership of reforms that are responsive to the local context is a very important question.

If reforms are to be sustained and become integrated into the fabric of community life, it is particularly important to create environments for change that support risk-taking and engagement by those who have the most at stake. In the Appalachian parts of Kentucky, creating spaces which encourage risk-taking has been particularly difficult to do through formal means. It is, however, a critical prerequisite in this traditionally marginalized region. Because of Appalachian peoples' emphasis on self-reliance and their concern for autonomy, any externally-initiated effort to improve rural schools or rural communities over the long term faces the daunting task of cultivating ownership of the effort by the residents themselves. It is not just the sustainability of any particular Reform Act that is at stake, but also the sustainability of viable, democratic communities of inquiry.

What are potential sources of skepticism, strength and support? In order to answer this question, it is critical to "see people in the contexts of power and meaning" (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1992: 17) which shape their resistance and inform the ways in which they are resilient. I wanted to see what reform efforts looked like on the ground; in classrooms, in teachers' lounges, in sandwich shops, at laundrymats, and on front porches. Using one southeastern Kentucky county's central high school as the nexus, I began a year-long, systematic investigation.

Central High School in Hickory County[1] offered an intriguing and consequential site from which to explore this question. Like many rural schools, Central High's campus was at a the critical juncture where issues of autonomy, identity, and authority intersect. It is the gathering place for teens drawn from the furthest reaches of the county, the place where local meets local, and local engages the state. Anzaldua (1987) posits that individuals who live on such cultural borderlands, along the rough edges "where world[views] collide" exist in a state of tensions and explicit paradoxes. These places of confluence are potentially creative spaces where ambivalence and negotiation can result in creative syntheses of old and new, inside and outside, mountain and mainstream.

---

[1] All place and person names are pseudonyms. For a further discussion see the section at the end of the Introduction entitled "Representation and Risk-taking."

The focus in this ethnographic research program is therefore, rightly, on the perspectives at the ground level, that is, how diverse participants constructed their most pressing problems, and how this in turn, generated new understandings of themselves, their communities, and their schools. Certainly, many of the changes would never have been proposed had KERA not recommended, even mandated, certain practices or policies. However, I give center stage to the local voices, bringing in KERA, and the officials who represented it, when appropriate to highlight their roles as catalysts, provocateurs, even foils.

Questions and Theoretical Approaches

The central research question guiding this work was: How did stakeholders in an Appalachian Kentucky high school address the problems that they targeted for reform? This led to a set of related questions, which include: Were they successful in cultivating grassroots engagement and advocacy on behalf of their high school? Did they achieve significant reforms of long-standing problems? What roles did KERA and the state officials charged with facilitating it play? And, most importantly, what do their experiences say about the underlying cultural contexts of this county in rural Central Appalachia?

My theoretical framework unites symbolic anthropology with the social construction of problems to analyze rural community engagement with educational reform. In answering the central research question, I break it into two constituent parts. First, I look at how these rural people constructed the most pressing problems that they identified for reform. Second, I make explicit the ways that they understood themselves as stakeholders within symbolic and political communities.

The Social Construction of "Problems"

The problems that precipitated the passage of KERA were not new. Indeed, they were the result of long-standing inequities in the provision, quality, and control of academic resources in the Commonwealth. Likewise, at Central High, the problems of underachievement, low attendance and high drop out rates, and an almost complete absence of parental participation in academic affairs were not new.

However, at this point in time, a critical mass of participants were no longer willing to accept the seemingly intractable as inevitable. They realized that they had a stake in no longer ignoring the problems of their high school. This realization was sparked by a burst of publicity about a Reform Act that also defined these outcomes as problematic and that backed up these assertions with financial resources to enhance school offerings. Legislated reform mandates coupled with a newly-appointed pro-KERA administration at Central provoked more Hickory parents and citizens to become stakeholders in "their" school. These two major trends had "set a fire" under a largely static system. For the first time in years, concerned parents felt that there just might be enough heat in the air to turn potential energy into coordinated action on behalf of children. Through the slowly emerging public forums for discourse about school reform, they questioned the very legitimacy of the status quo, thus launching the state of educational affairs into the public arena as a "problem" requiring reform.

A key dimension in creating ownership of educational policies is claiming the right to define the problems to be solved. As Berger and Luckman have noted, reality is socially defined; these "definitions of reality have self-fulfilling potency" (1967:116). Therefore, whether or not stakeholders are willing to identify a situation or paradigm as an intractable given, or whether it will be treated as problematic, questionable, and hence, even alterable, is a matter of great importance. Edelman elucidates the potential that is unleashed when something is defined as a problem:

> Problems come into discourse and therefore into existence as reinforcement of ideologies, not simply because they are there or because they are important for well-being. They signify who are virtuous and useful and who are dangerous and inadequate, which actions will be rewarded and which penalized. They constitute people as subjects with particular kinds of aspirations, self-concepts, and fears, and they create beliefs about the relative importance of events and objects. They are critical in determining who exercises authority and who accepts it. They construct areas of immunity from concern because those areas are not seen as problems. Like leaders and enemies, they define the contours of the social world, not in the same way for everyone, but in the light of the diverse situations from which people respond to the political spectacle. (1988:12-13).

Further, it is not enough for a state law to declare that there is a problem; local people must deem this to be true for themselves. For as Mrs. Norris, a central office person, put it, "You cannot fix a problem if you don't see it as one."

Communities of Stakeholders

The ways that residents of this Appalachian county defined their problems reflect their understandings of the symbolic and political worlds around them. Hickory Countians' understandings of the interdependence between people and physical places challenge models of education reform based on efficiency, mobility, and the independence of actors. In this small, close-knit rural setting, becoming a stakeholder in reform was not a private, personal matter. Rather, in the mountains the personal is both public and political. Thus the decision to become involved in educational affairs was a strategic choice made within a lively social arena.

In conceptualizing the umbrella term "stakeholder," I do not take a view of stakeholders that equates occupational categories (e.g. teacher, support staff) with homogenous interest groups as proposed by Guba and Lincoln (1989). While people on specific, job-related rungs of the occupational ladder may indeed share some of the same issues and interests, when they articulate their concerns, they do not speak for the entire group. Nor do they derive legitimacy as public actors simply by virtue of their social position. Indeed, such locally-relevant characteristics as being from another county or being female could seriously undermine an educator's credibility and authority, even if he or she held an administrative position.

Rather than assuming a person's position by virtue of their job, family name, income level, or gender, I entered the field open to variation within groups as well as variation among them. I asked: On what basis could people claim authority to speak? How do people talk about the stake they have in schools as institutions as well as in the education that children receive? How are these concerns related to the ways in which local people recognize and respect "expertise?"

I was particularly interested in the diverse ways in which people, especially those without formal power bestowed through professional titles, advocate their priorities and preferences. How do they determine what is worth becoming involved in? How do they bring their concerns to the public arena? As Hirschman (1970) notes, participants have several viable responses; they might either decide to voice their opinion, exit the problematic situation, or remain loyal through times of crisis and transition. Further, in describing the ways in which people become stakeholders, I look well beyond the roles that participants played in the formal school decision-making bodies. In this I build on insights made by Scott (1990) into the "hidden transcripts" of resistance, focusing on how subordinated groups, although they may appear silenced in schools, cultivate an active - yet private - discourse that critiques the exercise of power.

In the process of becoming involved, how did teens and adults stake out their territory within the shifting context of reform? What kinds of symbolic language, myths, shared stories, and rumors convey meaning and stability during a time of reform and uncertainty? How do people conceive of themselves and their "place" in the world? The latter is particularly important, for understanding the link between person and place provides a starting point for a concretely grounded ethic of rural renewal. Perhaps the most significant element that emerged from this work was a better understanding of the enduring relationship between Hickory Countians and their very special mountain homeplace.

The title of this dissertation is drawn from a comment made by Mrs. Ely, a reform-weary, but very determined, educator in Hickory County. In the year that I worked at Central, it seemed that the degrees of actual change were nearly imperceptible. But, to those engaged with the process of reform, changes were significant nonetheless. Standing with me on a hilltop, looking out over the mountains that rise high above Hickory's county seat, this long-time teacher remarked, "Reform is like moving mountains. It's grain of sand by grain of sand. You've got to take it one problem at a time."

When making this analogy, Mrs. Ely evoked many layers of meaning about mountains, human nature, and the slow process of fundamental change. In Appalachia, understandings about the physical world overlap with understandings about the human world; geographic location is intertwined with one's political location. Many teachers and students at Central still live in or close to the little hamlets that are named after their foreparents. For them, communities such as Brookings Store, Deer Lick, or McAllister Creek are pivotal places in the Brooking, White, Miller, Bargo, and McAllister lineages. These places, located on rivers, on the crossroads in the mountains, or on a steep and nearly inaccessible ridge, are closely linked with the various roles that these kinship groups have played during the nearly two hundred years of Hickory County's existence.

But despite such ties, in Hickory County as in so many other similarly positioned rural regions, people have increasingly torn up roots to pursue often elusive financial security elsewhere. And for those who have stayed, their mountains are not what they used to be; strip mining have radically altered the landscape, toxic waste trucked in from urban areas leeches into creeks, tourism has so commercialized the mountaineer stereotype that natives seem oddly out of place next to Hillbilly Land amusement parks. The results is a poignant sense of accelerating loss of both land and close family ties. Against this backdrop of dis-placement, Hickory Countians expressed the desire to reassert their distinctiveness and to preserve their mountain spaces, especially their schools, as belonging to them. Residents saw schools as second only to the churches as the key remaining vehicle for them to transmit valued cultural ways of being and relating with one another. In this conscious process of (re)claiming these spaces, they are actively engaged in constructing definable and bounded "imagined communities" (Anderson, 1983), deeply-rooted refuges that offer alternatives to the mainstream values of transience, consumption, individualism, and material measures of success.

Hickory County people live within multiple sets of nested communities. Their decisions to become involved in school affairs touch their families, friends, neighbors, clubs, churches, colleagues, and more as the ripples set off by their actions widen. Thus, in constructing this analysis of how communities of learners came together and negotiated the extent to which they would adopt externally-mandated changes to their schools, it is key to recognize the different ways that residents of Hickory County conceptualize what it means to be part of interdependent, rural mountain communities. In a booklet entitled Culture: The Roots of Community Spirit and Power regional educators and activists offered their grounded understanding of the meaning of community, which is worth quoting at length:

> The key word in all of this is community. The television images and political rhetoric of mainstream America stress the individual family as the basic unit of our society. In this view, a community is just a large collection of individual households. But those of us who are rooted in and work with Appalachian and Deep South communities understand community differently. To be sure, we also honor our ties to our parents and to our blood brothers and sisters. Yet we understand our community as including all our ties of kin and clan, our bonds of church and barter, our connections with inherited ways of talking and our ancestral bonds. To us, this much larger family is the basic unit of society because it is our community which carries our cultural traditions from generation to generation. It is in our communities that we learn who we are, where we come from, and how to do things which make us who we are. We learn our traditional lifeways from our elders, and together we learn how to adapt to changing times and circumstances. Our cultures, our communities and our sense of place are one. Most mainstream Americans do not understand culture in the way just described, as a series of living relationships among people and between people and their land. (Sapp, 1989:3-4)

This pervasive commitment to their own place inspired these Appalachians' desires to remain distinct and to act on their own behalf to create sustainable communities that they control. At the schools and in informal gathering places, parents, teachers, and young people debated what it means to be "educated" and how that relates to the kinds of lives that they hope to carve out for themselves. In the public spaces created by the democratic bodies mandated in KERA, stakeholders are redefining what "effective" schooling means to them and to the future of their homeplace. Together, they are actively constructing what it means to be of the mountains yet move mountains.

Organization

Section One

This dissertation is divided into three sections. The first contains chapters that each provide important background information. They introduce the enduring paradigms, paradoxes, and power relationships that contiriue to shape the local response to this externally-mandated reform.

Chapter One briefly presents the geopolitical context in which this drama of cultural negotiation is being played out. Hickory County was one of the original plaintiffs in the historic 1985 court case, Council for Better Education v. Collins, which, five years later, culminated in the development and enactment of the KERA legislation. I begin by looking at the motivating factors that inspired county educators to join with others and sue their state leaders, charging them with inequitable distribution of funds for education.

The primary reason that Hickory County leaders signed on was dire financial need. They had long known the financial pressures that made operating social and government services, including schools, in this rugged, widely dispersed Appalachian county a real challenge. The initiators of the lawsuit also recognized that greater investments in education are key places to begin in revitalizing persistently poor areas such as Appalachia. In rural areas such as Hickory County, the public schools are integral parts of their host communities. Because they do not exist in isolation, their problems cannot be solved in isolation. The challenge can thus be tremendous, for as Bullock (1985:9) notes, "the problems of poverty, educational deficiencies, and restrictive political control over the schools dovetail to create a near impenetrable morass of obstacles." Despite disagreement as to who was exactly at fault for the limited resource base in the county, there is a strong ethic of resilience in Hickory County, of standing tough and coming together when it serves their common interest. Such a critical moment was the decision to join in the lawsuit.

The 1985 lawsuit precipitated a series of court battles and appeals that eventually reached the Kentucky Supreme Court. The result was that the Supreme Court declared the entire system of common schools in the Commonwealth unconstitutional and sent the legislature back to the drawing board. In the Kentucky Education Reform Act that emerged, plaintiffs in Hickory County got much more than they ever intended, or, frankly, wanted.

I briefly summarize the major curricular, governance, and finance elements of the reform. I play special attention, however, to those aspects of KERA that were meant to democratize participation in school decision making and to broaden the base of stakeholders. This is not what Hickory County educational administrators sought in their initial case. They wanted more local control over an increased set of resources, but not a broadening of the base of people who had the authority to make decisions. In addition, former Hickory County education leaders are quick to point to particular governance measures that address nepotism, accountability to the state, and local political control that they feel specifically, and vindictively, target the original eastern Kentucky plaintiffs. These measures are seen as adding insult to injury, as unacceptably challenging the exclusive authority of educational elites. By contrasting the original intentions of a particular set of educators in this particular rural county with the priorities and accountability mechanisms finally written into the Reform Act, I set the stage for conflicts that propel the plots in the three stories in Section Two.

I then describe local leaders' initial resistance to the KERA reform and all that they believed it stands for. I illustrate how much the educational elite in Hickory county felt was at stake in resisting the mandates. As the flagship of the county school system, and as the single largest enterprise run by the county's largest employer, decisions about who was in charge of what happens at Central High were both high profile and high stakes. Control over their high school was a barometer of how much control local people were to exercise over their future.

Finally, I round out the discussion with a description of several key events that profoundly shifted the balance of power. As a result of intervention by state officials and the threat of a full-scale investigation into the district, as well as several key changes in leadership, the question shifted from whether or not they would implement

KERA to how they could negotiate the best position relative to local desires, proposed changes, and the state's new Office of Educational Accountability.

Chapter Two presents the environment and ethos of Central High school, the centerpiece of Hickory County's education system. Reform is a community process at two levels, within the school and in Hickory County as a whole. Further, reform is a process that requires the compliance, complicity, even cooperation of a critical mass of stakeholders, both youth and adult. As a result, it is fundamentally important to look at the kinds of early patterns of negotiation and community building that are set down at Central.

This is where young people, many of whom hope to live their entire lives within the region, learn to strike a balance between being educated and "getting above your raising," learn how to relate to peers and "outsiders," and learn how get the things they need and want. Through hallway gatherings, classroom interactions, even physical confrontations, students learn social mores from older students as well as from the teachers and staff. Spindler (1992) describes this critical process of cultural transmission as the:

> means employed by established members of the cultural system to inform new members coming into the system of the sanctioned instrumental linkages, to communicate how they are ranked, integrated, and in general, organized, and also to commit these new members to the support and continuance of these linkages and the belief system that gives them credibility. (In this sense educational institutions serve mainly functions of reaffirmation and recruitment).

As Spindler suggests, our understanding of the cultures in Hickory County can begin with an understanding of their high school's own cultural microcosm.

Drawing on my year's work in and around Central High, I present vignettes of key elements of school culture. In this section, my major emphasis is on the foregrounding of student perspectives through the use of data gathered through interviews, student writing, surveys, observations, focus groups, and casual conversations. In selecting data for this section, I have chosen those key ideas and concepts that students need to know in order to successfully navigate their way around Central. In important ways, these lessons foreshadow those learned by parents and teachers as they negotiate their own ways of working with, and sometimes, around school policies and key staff.

Chapter Three takes a closer look at what constitutes a meaningful education in Hickory County. The stories about what kind of curriculum the school should provide, whose interests should be represented in school policies, and who was fit to lead this prominent institution all rest upon an understanding of the conflicting ideas about "education" and "schooling" that Hickory Countians bring with them when they come to Central.

This chapter first explores the critical differences between "book learning" and "common sense." I note that there has long been a tension about the relative merits of these two kinds of knowledge and ways of knowing. Having and sharing knowledge is a powerful way of connecting with one's past and peers. Therefore, the messages that students receive through formal schooling, if they denigrate or dismiss the everyday kinds of knowledge that a student brings to school, might make that young person more likely to act as though she were "getting above her raising." Parents who have ethical concerns about the kinds of secular, modern, and individualistic values that their teens are learning at Central worry that their children will "lose the mountain" and forget where they came from.

A second, unresolved and fundamentally important question about what schooling in Hickory County means is the open-ended issue of whether participation in high school is only valuable if it leads to a gainful employment. The majority of Hickory Countians take a narrowly instrumental view of schooling and assert that the main reason to complete high school is to have a better chance at the few jobs that exist in the region. Students who plan on leaving Hickory County for at least a while take a somewhat different view of what their Central credential is good for, but they too realize the limited power of a degree when local jobs are often allotted on the basis of family, connections, and special favors rather than on merit alone.

Section Two

Section Two is organized around the retelling of three stories. Each was a critical episode in the process of addressing key problems which stakeholders at Central High identified. Each of the stories presents an area of conflict that percolated up from a set of long-standing concerns and that came to a head during the year that I was in residence.

The three stories in this chapter can be seen as concentric circles, each one encompassing an increasingly larger set of stakeholders. Reform happens one problem at a time. Therefore, the plot of each story begins with a core problem to be solved. The first story, in Chapter Four, centers on one of Central High's core missions - curriculum. This first narrative revolves around how stakeholders addressed the problem of Central High's unchallenging curriculum. Teachers' committees, work groups, and faculty meetings were the main forums in which participants debated what kind of education the school should offer and to whom these should be available. Chapter Five, the second story, widens the relevant community of reformers to include parents, who play a formal role through the site-based decision making councils mandated in the KERA reform. This case illustrates how stakeholders negotiated solutions to the problem of an exceedingly narrow base of representation in school affairs. Chapter Six, the third story, encompasses a new county-wide process for selecting a new superintendent of schools. The account focuses not only on the problem of whom to hire, but also on the question of how to create a more publicly accountable process.

Each story continues with related sets of examples of how various constituencies grappled with the core problems. In creating public and privates spaces for discourse, participants were drawn into an engaging exchange about the cultural paradigms that underscore how people work - or do not work - together around common goals. For some people, this process led to a greater recognition, and sometimes reevaluation, of the ways that they understood what it means to be a community. In the process of proposing reforms at Central, they asked: How can you have education and expertise yet not come across as though you were an expert, or worse yet, an outsider? How can we create coalitions around common interests? How can we use, even create, our own knowledge, e.g. numbers, scores, assessments, surveys, in ways that are empowering rather than denigrating? How can we draw upon symbols and metaphors that are rich and meaningful to us, e.g. the mountains, to create a vision of our future that reflects our most cherished values?

In important ways, each of these three accounts are *my* stories. Issues of gaining voice are central to the message of the analysis; they are also the medium of the analysis. The ethnographic nature of the research extends the discourse on communities of inquiry by providing a critical avenue through which the voices of those most profoundly affected by the changes can emerge. I spent a great deal of time listening to and talking with a diverse array of students and staff. As a result, this dissertation illuminates a range of opinions and gives space to people from widely disparate positions and degrees of social privilege within the county. The blend of interviews, observations, directed writing exercises, surveys, and metaphor-generating exercises give vivid testimony to the students' clear understandings of the paradoxes they encounter at Central and the limits of reform mandated by a distant legislature. As a result of these techniques, the stories that emerge are more than the voices of just a few informants, they are they the blending of many disparate groups, of people who seldom speak to one another, but who all speak through me.

The stories are the work of a participant observer, the weaving together of fragments of overheard conversations as well as ribbons of solicited interviews, of notes passed in class as well as carefully worded surveys, of vivid moments as well as sustained dramas. The stories are the melding of what insiders saw fit to share with me, a young woman, a well-educated outsider from California. They are excerpts from the volumes that they chose to tell me nonetheless, a person whom they came to regard as a trusted confidant, a "sounding board," "someone who actually listens to our side." The stories are a merging of the "myths" that were evoked in public spaces with the "truths" that were confided in private. As the constructed narratives of a set of interdependent communities, the stories are a sometimes discordant harmonizing of the multiple, and often conflicting, individual narratives.

In the first section there is a balance between the ideas of young people and their teachers. However, in these three stories the main focus of attention shifts, from youth learning about how one negotiates a place and a future within the uncertain context of reform, to how the adults around them do so. Nonetheless, throughout each story I continue to weave in a thread of running commentary by youth as they understand and critique the inconsistencies, priorities, and tactics of the adults around them.

Section Three

In Section Three, I revisit the initial question of how stakeholders addressed their most pressing problems. I look at the different ways in which participants felt that they were indeed successful in cultivating grassroots engagement and advocacy on behalf of Central and its precious charges. I also critique some of the barriers, some of which were self-imposed, that posed seemingly insurmountable obstacles for change. In some areas those who took a stake in change did achieve significant reforms of long-standing problems; often just getting a critical mass of their peers to acknowledge that there even was a problem was significant in and of itself. In this process, KERA and the state officials charged with facilitating it, played important but usually supporting roles. Rather, the pervasive and enduring contexts of power and meaning in Hickory County, Kentucky were what dominated center stage.

I explore these issues by organizing elements introduced in the first section and further elaborated in the stories into six cultural themes. Chapter Seven presents a summary of each of these important motifs in Hickory County culture. These themes are not static frameworks that are impersonal absolutes. Rather they are dynamic ways of approaching and understanding change. At the heart of this dynamic was the interplay between resistance and resilience.

The ways that Hickory County stakeholders defined their most pressing problems and the ways that they constructed acceptable solutions arise from concretely located cultural understandings of their lives within a set of interdependent Appalachian communities. They resisted external definitions of what their priorities or policies should be, in part to assert their continued autonomy to the state, but also because they did not wish to simplistically import solutions that they felt were mismatched to their goals and lifeways. As one parent stated, "I don't want to be a model school if it means we are modeled after someone else!"

At the same time, (re)defining their own problems created spaces for local reformers to take into account, and thereby reify, local values of mutual interdependence, personal relationships, and the enduring importance of family ties. In this way, their response to reform can also be seen as engendering greater resilience. It ultimately lead, albeit in a way state reformers could not have fully anticipated, to sustainable ownership of educational reforms. By reclaiming the terms on which they were willing, and able, to adopt reforms, stakeholders in Hickory County are, indeed, moving mountains.

Representation and Risk-Taking

Effecting change in "Hickory County," Kentucky is a highly risky venture for those involved. At an early point in the research, it became apparent that issues of anonymity were critical to the completion of this research. "You, know, Maureen, what you have there on that tape could ruin me," stated a teacher, restating for both of our benefit that which we each already knew. Namely, in a county such as this where politics are an intensively personal business, where professional jobs are exceedingly hard to come by, where memories are long, and retribution possibly more than an idle threat, knowledge about what someone has said is a very powerful commodity.

Participating in this research work could be a personally empowering experience as well. Teens and others whose voices are so often considered marginal in the push for reform spoke of feeling valued for the first time. "Are you really going to write that down?" and "Can we really tell you what we really think?" were two of the ways that respondents reacted to being taken seriously. Even for adult interviewees, the sense that taking the risk to speak out would be worth it, was like, as a mother of two high schoolers said, the lifting of a heavy load. Some just wanted to be heard and felt that no local educator, administrator, or even Board member would be willing or fully able to listen with an open mind.

In response to concerns for protecting the identity of individual informants, I have adopted a strategy for naming speakers and describing actors that expresses key elements of the person but does not reveal their individual name or specific position. All of the place and personal names used are pseudonyms. Place names have been constructed along the most common lines of name giving, that is, from a dominant family (e.g. McAllister Creek), a local landmark (e.g. Deer Lick), or a prominent neighborhood institution (e.g. Brookings Store). In certain places I have made the choice to describe Central High and its environs in ways that do not correspond to *any* school or community in the region. At other times I have emphasized traits that are common to many mountain high schools that I visited throughout southeastern Kentucky. These are added features to help the reader focus on the analysis rather than try to figure out the exact location of this particular site. Although this concern for not including specifics that would make the site easier to identify has led to the regrettable loss of some detail, residents of Hickory County will recognize, and hopefully forgive, these strategic omissions.

I have also used means to convey the message without jeopardizing the messenger. For adults, I have used family names that have been selected from among common ones in the region, although no one is named by their actual lineage. Students have been given first names only, again from ones common in or characteristic of the county. The sex of the respondent has usually, but not always, been maintained. In cases where the comment made was representative of responses from people of either sex and the sex of the particular speaker would have likely identified him or her, I may have changed the relevant pronoun.

In addition to these ways of protecting individual identities, I have used other techniques for protecting individual persons. Whenever possible, I interviewed a stratified random sample of all members of a particular category, i.e. high school teachers, involved parents, students in the "prep" cliques or in the "out back" cliques. When presenting quotes from individuals that were characteristic of respondents from that group, I have created composite descriptors of the speaker. By describing the person in ways that would apply to most of her or his peers, I am able to focus on the most salient aspects of that speaker (has no first-order kin who completed high school), rather than an idiosyncratic aspect (occupation of the mother) that might identify the speaker. Such a meticulous concern for detail may not seem apparent or even necessary to the distant reader. But it is critical to those who must continue to live within a close-knit county of less than 30,000, where people, especially those who are often in trouble, outspoken, or involved are frequent subjects of casual conversation and, sometimes, bitter censure. Further, when using quotes from the many interactions with these participants, they were not always speaking as a principal or a board member, sometimes they were speaking as a concerned parent or frustrated civic group organizer. In those cases, I have used this more salient descriptor to describe the speaker.

Certainly, some people are harder to disguise than others as they are the only one or one of a very few in their category. Those school board members, principals, superintendents, superintendent screening committee members, and site-based council members with whom I spent considerable time were often reluctant at first to share candid thoughts. The risks that they took in contributing to this project should not be underestimated. Although many of them held or still hold powerful positions of influence, this, ironically, also makes them more vulnerable as they have more to lose. However, as they came to see that I was indeed interested in pursuing the diversity of opinions, they became more open. As they came to realize that I intended to create a fair representation of the issues that concerned all of them, they wanted to make sure that their side was also given space.

I have also made the strategic decision to focus first on the *process* of reform and then on the *people* who made those reforms possible. While this is perhaps the exact opposite of how Hickory Countians would retell these stories - to them the individuals involved are paramount - I feel that my choice of focus is appropriate. To dwell on the individuals involved would shift the storyline from the decisions, actions, beliefs, and myths that were shared by many people to the personal motivations and histories of key players. While the latter are important, and indeed, I emphasized them in my individual interviews, they detract from a focus on what happened in the few public arenas that existed. I hope that readers will see the common thread that I have drawn through these accounts and see the range of concerns shared by numerous actors. Perhaps readers will discover commonalties with others whom they might otherwise dismiss or denigrate as "Other." It would be a shame to reject conclusions out of hand because they seem to be attributable to someone who the reader does not identify with - or does not wish to identify with. By disguising the individual speaker, I hope that readers, especially from Hickory County, will attend to the words rather than being swayed by who the speaker is - or is presumed to be.

My goal is to provide an account which, as Geertz (1976) so aptly states, "illustrates the particularities without reducing their generalizeability." This is not simply an analysis of a very localized process, rather it is a case of reform that shares many features in common with the experiences and concerns of other people, in Kentucky, Appalachia, and elsewhere. Indeed, it has been striking as I have presented this work in California, Utah, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Texas, and, of course, Kentucky, that listeners have repeatedly responded with, "That could/does happen here too!" Although it is beyond the scope of this work to make explicit comparisons, it is my hope that the reader will recognize the many similarities that Hickory Countians share with other rural people, marginalized ethnic groups, residents of a range of Appalachian regions, and Kentuckians in general. In the many presentations of this work that have preceded and contributed considerably to this written dissertation, I have been struck by the number of listeners, from inner city principals to international scholars, who stated that these themes resonated with their own experiences.

Several other related aspects of representation need to be mentioned here. Appalachia has always been seen as "a land apart," a place defined in terms of its purported deficiencies in comparison to more urban or "developed" parts of the United school, I let respondents' own levels of literacy speak for themselves. However, it is my hope that readers will concentrate on the message that the respondents are trying to give voice to, whether they are phrased eloquently or lie buried under the grammar of a senior still struggling to find words equal to his thoughts.

In making the many difficult decisions inherent in a project of this kind, I faced an additional level of complexity when responding to those people who desperately wanted their real names to be included in my "book." Most of these people were long-time activists, who had put their jobs and, they believed, their children's futures on the line to speak out repeatedly about what they saw as blatant abuses of power and position. The sense that through participating in this work their risks would finally pay off was a difficult one to undermine with the assertion that everyone would be given a pseudonym. Even if not explicitly labeled, perhaps they will recognize their own contributions in this work, as several Hickory County readers of early drafts of this work have done. Perhaps they will also find that they are not alone in their perceptions and desires for the future, even if such widespread support is not readily apparent in the public spaces that currently exist for discourse and action.

This research must stand on its own. However, readers, whether from Hickory County or outside, will bring to the reading of it their own particular experiences, assumptions, and reasons for reading. I hope that each reader will find some "truth" for him or herself. As a long-time teacher and frequent conversation partner confided, "I am not worried about your paper being true, I am just worried that it will be *too* true." I can only offer this work and hope that even if the conclusions are hard to hear, they will be heard.

Those who are interested in a more complete discussion about the intersection of my methods with the meanings that I document should refer to the methodology section in the Appendix.

SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND CONTEXTS

CHAPTER ONE

HICKORY COUNTY AND THE KENTUCKY EDUCATION REFORM ACT OF 1990

The Passage and Content of the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990

Council for Better Education v. Collins (85-CI-1759)

On November 20, 1985 the Council for Better Education (CBE) filed a civil action suit in the capitol city's Franklin Circuit Court. They charged that the systems for funding and operating the state's common schools were "in conflict with the Kentucky Constitution and the United States Constitution, and are, therefore, invalid to the extent of such conflict" (Council for Better Education v. Collins, 1985). The plaintiffs challenged that the General Assembly was not fulfilling the legal charge set out in the Kentucky Constitution adopted in 1891. For section 183 of the Commonwealth's Constitution states that "The General Assembly shall, by appropriate legislation, provide for an efficient system of common schools throughout the state."

The suit was brought by the Council for Better Education, a non-profit organization that represented 66 school districts, most of which were rural and property-poor. Co-plaintiffs were seven boards of education (mostly from Appalachia), and 22 public school students from those districts. Hickory County was among those districts represented. Defendants included Governor Collins, Superintendent of Public Instruction McDonald, State Treasurer Mills, and in their representative capacities, the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The process of uniting this large and diverse set of districts into one constituency had been a long and complicated one (Dove, 1991). Spearheaded by former Department of Education educator, Arnold Guess, the Council for Better Education (CBE) was also led by education finance expert Kern Alexander, and attorneys Ted Lavit, Thomas Lewis and Debra Dawahare. Guess had worked hard to bring as many superintendents from Kentucky's 177 districts as possible on board. Although not all eventually joined, Dove (1991) notes that affluent districts did not impede the suit either. If they had resisted equalization of state and local funds for education, the CBE's task would have been much more difficult.

Bert Combs was brought on board to head the CBE's legal effort; in many regards they could not have found a better person. Bert Combs had been raised in eastern Kentucky, and understood the challenges facing that region well. He rose to prominence and public respect as a lawyer, eventually serving on the state's highest court. He was Governor of Kentucky from 1959-1963, in which time he earned the moniker "the education governor" because of his successful drive to raise the sales tax for schools. He went on to the United States Court of Appeals, and later joined the law firm that became Wyatt, Tarrant, and Combs.

Over a year of preparation work culminated in the document the CBE set before the Circuit Court. One of the most important aspects to their preparation had been securing and keeping the support of the public school superintendents and boards of education who had agreed to be plaintiffs. Hickory County was one of the districts that after a relatively short decision period, signed on board.

Hickory County Leaders' Rationale

Superintendent McAllister of Hickory County was convinced to join in this rather risky lawsuit because it offered the opportunity to generate significant new funds for the public schools of his county. In the past two decades of his tenure as superintendent, he had seen several programs to increase local and state revenues for the schools come and go. He described the highlights of past years that led him to convince the Board of Education to support his participation in the CBE suit:

> In Raymond Barber's administration there was more attention to the property poor districts. And Julian Carrol and the Power Equalization [Program of 1976] gave us a taste of free money. J.W. Brown in the 1980s cut it out. Then came along Kern Alexander and later Bert Combs and we talked about it with about 85 superintendents and school board chairs. We decided to do it [join in the suit] to get more money for the district.

The fiscal viability of Hickory County's school system was not a trivial matter.

The tax base to support public schooling in Hickory County is particularly low. Hickory has been listed as a "persistently impoverished" for a long time. The percent of county residents in poverty has continued a gradual rise, increasing from 1979's rate of 37.1 percent to 41.0 percent in 1989. According to the 1990 Census, the median family income was $15,412, which includes single parent families. In 1990 the median Hickory County household income was $12,697. Households include married couple families

(59.6 percent), single householders (18.1 percent), of which 81.8 percent were headed by single women, and the remainder, 22.3 percent were classified as "non family households" by the Census bureau. This last subcategory includes grandparents raising grandchildren, unmarried couples, and multiple adult dwellings.

Households reported income from various sources and some received income from several sources. Fifty-six point two percent of households had wage and salary income in 1990; the mean total income from paid employment was $26,273. Social security income was reported by 33.5 percent of households; the mean SSI income was $6,469. Despite the local perception that "everybody's on welfare," only 22.1 percent of households received public assistance of any kind. Further, the mean combined income from public assistance, including Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Women, Infants and Children (WIC), and other sources was only $3,521.

If the total income were broken down equitably, the per capita income in Hickory county would be $7,776. However, income is very unequally distributed among families and children. The proportion of people living below the poverty level in Hickory county is high, almost three times the national average. But children and the elderly are especially hard hit. Of related children under 18 years, 50.5 percent lived with incomes below the poverty level compared to 34.2 percent of those 18 and over. Fourty-four point six percent of all families with related children under 18 years were below the poverty level. As elsewhere, female single householder families with related children under 18 were by far the most impoverished, 76.2 percent of these families lived below the poverty level. Of senior citizens, those over 65, 29.3 percent lived below the poverty level. It is important to note, however, that since the elderly are more likely to derive most of all of their income from minimal SSI payments, retirement pensions, and similar sources, their degree of impoverishment may be even greater than for younger adults.

In Hickory County, it is not enough to point out that many people live at or below the poverty level, many strain to maintain even a tenuous hold well below the official poverty line. Of those families officially designated as in poverty, 51.8 percent had incomes that were *less than half* of the official poverty level! When you look at all households, 35.2 percent were officially "in poverty." Seventy-three percent of these were below 75 percent of the poverty index. Compared to the 35.2 percent under the official mark, a further 14 percent lived within 100-159 percent of the poverty level, and 12.7 percent had incomes 150-199 percent of the poverty level. Slightly more than one-third, 38.2 percent, had incomes 200 percent of the poverty index or higher; some of these were much higher.

Unemployment and underemployment profoundly shape these figures. In 1990, of 22,160 people 16 and over, only 8,752 (39.5 percent) were gainfully employed. Surprisingly, only 1,268 (5.7 percent) were "unemployed." However, the situation becomes much clearer when you look at the number who are no longer seeking work, the so called "discouraged workers" who contribute to the 54.7 percent, or 12,123 adults who are not or are no longer in the workforce. Many of these adults could become gainfully employed if the jobs were there, and if they had the skills, ambitions, connections, and transportation necessary to compete for these new slots.

Although the official accounts do not capture illegal and unreported income, marijuana flourishes in the hills. In fact, the National Guard has red-lined Hickory County as one of the leading producers of marijuana in the central Appalachian area. In booby-trapped sections of corn fields, in the wooded thickets behind homes, and on open bottomland behind private fences, a growing number of Hickory Countians of all ages produce marijuana and related products for their own use and for the insatiable southeastern and midwestern U.S. (including urban) market. Most high school students were well aware that it was sold on and near school grounds, behind stores and service shops and out of private homes. Numerous Central students told me of their own patches, and could easily quote the prices to be had per ounce on the local as well as regional market. Although concerned adults and teens in civic, school, and church groups are becoming increasingly open to acknowledging this issue, sales remain steady.

Hickory County education leaders also recognized that they had to allot a disproportionate amount of their budget for transportation compared to more condensed and urbanized districts. In the 1990 Census, 17.8 percent of households had no vehicle available to them. Exacerbating this problem is the condition of many of the routes and the lack of public alternatives for those who do not have a reliable car. There is no public transportation system in this widely-dispersed county. Private and im promptu "taxi" services are often unaffordable for those who need them the most. Certainly, the condition of the main roads has improved greatly in the last 20, even 10 years. Federal and state relief funds have made it possible to pave nearly all main roads. Recently, there has been an influx of funds available for maintaining bridges on the hundreds of low-lying creek beds and for raising flood-prone segments of road. By the end of 1996, Hickory County residents will even have access to a four lane, state highway that can take them to other adjoining counties and even into Virginia and Tennessee. However in the dozens of less-favored areas of the county- sometimes as little as a few hundred yards off these main lines - there are still a significant number of side roads that remain to be paved, or even regularly graveled.

These persistent conditions were such that the single most compelling rationale for getting on board was the promise that for whatever it was worth or for however long it lasted, this lawsuit might provide a way for the superintendent and board to provide more resources. In persistently poor Hickory County, the promise of more money was in itself reason enough to act.

Lawyers, Lawsuits, and Legislation

Summarized very briefly, the CBE suit precipitated a high-profile and quick response from the courts of the Commonwealth. Council for Better Education v. Collins was heard by Judge Ray Corns of the Franklin Circuit Court. His ruling on May 31, 1988 was that the General Assembly had indeed failed to provide an efficient system of common schools, and that the financial system was unconstitutional. He ruled that the defendants, including the Governor, had a constitutional duty to revisit the regulations and make appropriate recommendations, the General Assembly had to devise and approve a new funding system. Further, he wrote that the Court saw "no viable alternative" for raising adequate funds except by a tax increase (Deaton et al, 1994).

Corn's final judgment of October 14, 1988 incorporated nine principles to guide the legislature in providing for this "efficient system of common schools."[1] These were the outcomes of a report from five public hearings held by a five-person advisory committee chaired by Kern Alexander. These included:

- The establishment, maintenance and funding of the system of common schools are the sole responsibility of the Legislature.
- It is free to all.
- It is available to all Kentucky children.
- It is substantially uniform throughout the state.
- It provides equal educational opportunities to all Kentucky children.
- It is monitored by the General Assembly to assure there is no waste, no mismanagement, and no political influence.
- Schools are operated under the premise that an adequate education is a constitutional right.
- Sufficient funding provides each child an adequate education.
- An "adequate education" was defined as one which develops the following seven capacities:

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[1] The court defined this "efficient system of common schools" as "a tax supported, coordinated organization, which provides a free, adequate education to all students throughout the state, regardless of geographic location or local fiscal resources." (Council for Better Education v. Wilkinson (85-CI-1759), 1988:§4)

- Communication skills necessary to function in a complex, changing civilization.
- Knowledge to make economic, social, and political choices.
- Understanding of governmental processes as they affect the community, state, and nation.
- Sufficient self-knowledge and knowledge of one's mental and physical wellness.
- Sufficient grounding in the arts to enable each student to appreciate his or her cultural and historical heritage.
- Sufficient preparation for students to choose and pursue their life's work intelligently.
- Skills enabling students to compete successfully with students form other states.

These would be reflected essentially in full in the final document produced at the next level.

As expected, the defense attorneys appealed directly to the Kentucky Supreme Court. The case began on December 7, 1988 just two months after Judge Corn's final ruling. On June 8, 1989 the Justices shocked the state by declaring the *entire* system of education unconstitutional, not just the system of financing. They stated:

> This decision applies to the entire sweep of the system - all its parts and parcels. This decision applies to all the statutes creating, implementing, and financing the system and to all regulations, etc. pertaining thereto. This decision covers the creation of local school district, school board, and the Kentucky Department of Education to the Foundation program and Power Equalization Program. It covers school construction and maintenance, teacher certification - the whole gamut of the common schools system in Kentucky.

To this Bert Combs responded, "My clients asked for a thimble-full and [instead] they got a bucket-full" (Lexington Herald Leader, June 7, 1989:A1).

The Justices placed "absolute duty" on the General Assembly to "re-create, reestablish a new system of common schools in the Commonwealth." They stated that this duty was "a constitutional mandate placed by the people on the 138 members of that body who represent those self-same people."

Further, the General Assembly must:

> not only establish the system, but it must monitor it on a continuing basis so that it will always be maintained in a constitutional manner. The General Assembly must carefully supervise it, so that there is no waste, no duplication, no mismanagement, at any level. The system of common schools must be adequately funded to achieve its goals. The system of common schools must be substantially uniform throughout the state. Each child, every child, in this Commonwealth must be provided with an equal opportunity to have an

> adequate education. (Rose v. Council for Better Education, Inc., 1989: §186, §215, §216,)

The Legislature's response to this charge was to appoint a Task Force on Education Reform by July, 1989.

The Task Force was composed of members of the House and Senate leadership, appointees of the Governor, and expert consultants brought in from all over the nation. They divided their work into three sections; curriculum, finance, and governance. Task Force members voted to adopt their final report on March 7, 1990. At the same time the General Assembly and the Governor jointly developed a plan for funding the new initiatives and structures. These became House Bill 940. They were swiftly approved by the 1990 General Assembly and became known as the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 or, colloquially as "KERA."

Sore Spots

While seeing the suit through court and through the appeals process, Hickory County leaders had several experiences that rubbed them the wrong way. These sore spots were what they remember most when recalling the development of KERA.

The first series of offenses were threats and intimidation tactics (e.g. insinuating misconduct, official audits) that the defense brought against the plaintiff districts. Understandably, Superintendent of Public Instruction McDonald was greatly angered by the actions of former Department of Education employee Guess. She, her staff, and later the defense team made the local districts question whether it had been wise to engage her in this conflict (Dove, 1991).

One of the key strategies used by defense attorney William Scent was to blame property-poor districts for their own financial plight by pointing out low local tax rates, and claiming that mismanagement and waste were the real causes of their problems. This strategy did not work, as it was "too accusatory and instead drew sympathy to the poorer districts." Further, the county inadvertently selected by the defense as a prime example of what a poor yet well managed school could be was actually a wealthy county. Their strategies backfired (Dove, 1991).

Later, in the process of appealing the Corns verdict, State Auditor Babbage called for an audit of the plaintiff school districts to try to prove the point that mismanagement and fraud were indeed the cause for these districts' plights. Hickory County's Mr. McAllister recalled angrily:

> They were harassing eastern Kentucky . . . the state wanted to get rid of everyone who signed on to the suit. It helps their feelin's, proves their point that eastern Kentucky would have plenty of money if they didn't have fraud, mismanagement, and waste. They audited the 66 districts [who had participated in the initial lawsuit]. Bert Combs threatened Babbage and he eased off. They drew a random sample from the set, but eastern Kentucky was still more represented.

He then produced a copy of a 1988 memo that had been circulated around the targeted superintendents in which state investigators were instructed to "do the 66." However, much to the defense's frustration, the tactic produced no clear cut results as all the audits were clean. However, Hickory County educators remembered this attempt vividly and used it when making their case that the state is, with enforcement of KERA, just looking for yet another reason to cause them grief.

The second area of contention was that Hickory County leaders felt that they were purposely excluded from the process of developing and writing KERA. From the lowest ranked staff position to the top levels, county educators said that the fatal flaw in KERA, the reason that it will not - can not - work in Hickory County at all is that grassroots experts were not asked for their input. It was the consensus of faculty and staff at Central that the Reform Act had been an insider job put together with the input of "experts" drawn from everywhere other than (southeastern) Kentucky. A principal in the county summed up the clear-cut opinions of his peers:

> I think very unfortunately. . . people that could have helped in the thing were not asked. You didn't have anybody from the University of Kentucky, you didn't have anybody from the University of Louisville or any of the other state colleges on any kind of committee here, or have any kind of input whatsoever with KERA, and all through the history of education in Kentucky or any state that I know anything about, they have definitely used some of the university people to help them. . . I think we have some expertise at the universities and there was nobody from the superintendent's group, there was nobody from the teacher's group. . . you wouldn't have this mess that you had in the primary programs if you would have had some people from the education departments in universities that do that thing.

Asked why he thought that Appalachians were not asked to consult , he responded, "You see," and added with bitter sarcasm, "*we* have no *ex-perts* to help!"

An especially sore point with Hickory Countians was that those who had brought the initial lawsuit had not been consulted as to what they actually wanted. They were not considered to be experts on their own needs or in formulating applicable solutions. This sense that the document that resulted from "their" lawsuit was not of their making, was in effect "the state's" contributed greatly to the widespread sense at

Central High that KERA neither represented their best interests not was applicable to their situation.

Further, Central High educators, like some of their colleagues in elementary schools in the county, felt that while the original suit had been reasonable, the resulting legislation was a "political" act. Local people were inclined to use the term "political" in a confusing array of ways, but it most always had negative connotations that often ended up with the speaker stating that once again, Eastern Kentucky/their family/their end of the county/etc. was on the bottom of the heap as others pressed their interests forward. Mr. Evans, a former district administrator, talked about the contribution that outsiders made in politicizing the process. He felt that there were more politics in the schools now as well as:

> in real politics and I think on the state level, the state board of education is a lot more political than it used to be. I think Dr. Boysen has been criticized for a lot of things unjustly because he was from California.

He continued with this motif of outsiders as frequent and easy targets for local criticism, stating, "He's an outsider and it would be easier to blame him than it is [local administrators]." He hypothesized that in his region people were especially quick to jump on outsiders:

> that's probably true to the mountains here. Like when [a War on Poverty program] was big and something went wrong and you had an administrator from Illinois - and we had one from Illinois - why it was easy to blame him, much easier to blame him than it was to blame the second in command who was local. . . People could say he [Boysen] don't know what he's doing, he don't know mountain people. He knows San Diego, California.

Although external experts were criticized for usurping local input, Hickory Countians were more likely to blame their own elected officials for excluding and marginalizing them than the advisors brought in from other states. In criticizing the way the legislators acted, Mr. Evans drew on local concepts of how one worked with friends to address common problems:

> Well, I don't think the outside people would cause the problem, I think our politicians in the legislature I think are who did it. We have nobody to blame but them, and they should have got some [local advice] - well, if'n I was in the legislature and something came up in the medical field for example, I would definitely go to some of my doctor friends and find out something.

If the state had included a greater diversity of experts, this retired administrator criticized, they might not have overlooked some important differences:

> It seem to me that something as big as KERA definitely ought to have participation at least from the universities and regardless of what we think of local superintendents, because some of these local superintendents know what they're doing and you need some from eastern Kentucky or some from [capitol city's] County or some from of the counties like that and difference places. For example, transportation in Hickory County would cost 4 times as much for people as it would in the Bluegrass.

Whenever Central staff ran into a aspect of KERA that they did not like or agree with, the consensus that KERA had been written by "a teacher who never taught and a lawyer who did not practice law" was invoked as making the entire document unworthy of their respect.

A third sore spot was that county leaders felt that Hickory County had become a pawn in a power struggle that grew much larger than they, or any one else, initially anticipated. Mr. Evans continued:

> We had a whole lot of politics going on in the state level that time, and you had politics on the local level. Unfortunately, the schools were caught in the middle of both of these. There was a big power play.

Other teachers at Central were equally quick to state that the Reform Act had been passed in order for legislators to take control over public education and to give themselves the right to monitor one of the state's most important areas of jurisdiction, the public schools.

When recalling how the news accounts of KERA implementation characterized eastern Kentucky, Hickory Countians repeatedly felt that they had been put down, caricatured, and stereotypes exaggerated to as to create a common enemy, a buffoon-like antagonist who need not be taken seriously even though he aroused pity. Mr. Evans felt that the state-level politicians had used eastern Kentucky:

> just like our black people. I think eastern Kentucky has been used exactly like the black people when you have one party that uses the black people almost totally and here in eastern Kentucky mountains we have one party that pretty much uses us. . . [it's] the Republican party, and I'm a Republican, and I think the Republican party is taking this region here for granted . . .[they] don't really say derogatory things about us, but I think they have taken us for granted in the way they use us to help the people from their own areas.

Another community civic leader who had several children in school, Mr. Jenkins, asserted that in the process of drawing attention to the financial plight of several eastern Kentucky districts, legislators had exaggerated the problems to make their case. He concurred with Mrs. Raleigh, a teacher who likewise had attended Hickory County Schools and who thought that they had a model school district and in some practices were ahead of other areas of the state. She asserted that in Hickory County "the people that work are good workers, probably better workers, and the kids that go to school compete well. Unfortunately," she added, "we have a real problem in attendance in eastern Kentucky. . ." Rather than seeing the range of excellence, the result of focusing only on the negative aspects of the schools was that state level actors had made the stereotypes of mountain people worse. Mr. Evans reflected on the long-term consequences of this act:

> Our self-esteem here has always been a problem and continues to be a problem. . . I don't know whether KERA can help that or not. I hoped it would with the attention that education was getting.

But, he continued the media portrayal of eastern Kentucky that accompanied and followed the passage of the Reform Act, paradoxically, reinforced negative stereotypes of the Appalachian part of the state.

> If we want to listen to the governor candidates today, they talk about eastern Kentucky in a different term than they do the rest of the state, they single it out, they want jobs for eastern Kentucky. It's [the stereotype of poverty and poor education] not true and I think all teachers know it, but still I'm not sure that we believe it all the time, but our kids that go onto the University of Kentucky or wherever, they go and compete with anybody.

Teachers at Central also talked about how the increased attention brought to their area through KERA had made them feel like they were deviant and deficient rather than just different. In the stories that form chapter four of this dissertation, I follow up on the ramifications of these reactions.

The Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990

On April 11, 1990 Governor Wallace Wilkerson signed House Bill 940. On July 13, the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 (KERA) become the law of the Commonwealth.

KERA contained much more than Hickory County plaintiffs ever expected, and, frankly, more than they wanted. The main provisions of the final 1990 version of the Reform Act is summarized in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1.

The Main Features of the Kentucky Educational Reform Act

The main goals of KERA are to instill in educators a new philosophy that all children can meet high expectations for learning complex and challenging materials, to rid the system of entrenched negative political influences, and to achieve an equitable distribution of financial resources.

- **Curriculum**
- KERA eliminates curriculum mandates and substitutes instead a list of seven core capacities (these constitute an "adequate education"). Schools are held accountable for devising means to achieve the following:
    - Communication skills necessary to function in a complex and changing civilization.
    - Knowledge to make economic, social, and political choices.
    - Understanding of governmental processes as they affect the community, state, and nation.
    - Sufficient self-knowledge and knowledge of one's mental and physical wellness.
    - Sufficient grounding in the arts to enable each student to appreciate his or her cultural and historical heritage.
    - Sufficient preparation to choose and pursue one's life's work intelligently.
    - Skills enabling students to compete favorably with students in other states.
- Performance-based assessments (portfolios, etc.) replace standardized testing.
- School-based decision making operates (via school-based teacher-parent-administrator school-based councils) to find means to achieve KERA goals.
- Schools that demonstrate improvements in mean student performance will be rewarded; those that do not will be sanctioned, including, in the most dire cases, replacement of personnel and interim control by the state.
- The following are part of the comprehensive set of changes in "input" that are designed to facilitate these goals:
    - Mandatory preschool for "at-risk" and handicapped four year-olds
    - Family Resource Centers and Youth Service Centers in or near all schools with 20% + "at-risk" students to provide counseling, information, and resources
    - Statewide program to enhance the use of technology
    - Non-graded primary instead of K-3 grades
    - Waiver of school fees for needy students
    - Program for extended educational services (e.g. tutoring)
    - Ongoing professional development programs that provide information on KERA

- **Governance**
- Teacher certification moves from the state board to new Educational Professional Standards Board
    - They also oversee the certification of skilled people through alternative certification programs
- Regional Service Centers set up by the state to assist in professional development
- Superintendents' Training Program and Assessment Center and a Principals' Assessment Center that require participation and compliance
- Reconstitution of the State Board for Elementary and Secondary Education
- Elected Superintendent of Public Instruction transfers power to the appointed Commissioner of Education

- She or he must completely reorganize and reconstitute the Department of Education after 7-1-91
- In order to address the nepotism, patronage, and intimidation that state officials declared to be particularly prevalent in poor, rural and Appalachian districts:
  - Superintendent now in charge of final hiring and firing rather than local school board
  - The Board hires the superintendent with recommendations from a superintendent screening committee and cannot simply fire him or her
  - Persons with relatives employed by the school district are ineligible to serve on the board (with few exemptions)
  - School employees are prohibited from donating to or campaigning for school board candidates
  - Board members must have a high school education or GED
  - Superintendents' and principals' relatives cannot be employed in the same district (some provisions for grandfathering in current employees)
  - The processes for teacher termination and principal demotion have been changed
- Establishment of the independent Office of Education Accountability under the state legislature

- **Finance**
- The Support Education Excellence in Kentucky (SEEK) Fund establishes a new funding mechanism that equalizes access to resources via a guaranteed amount per pupil supplemented for "at-risk" student services, exceptional needs, and transportation
- To access SEEK funds a district must contribute by levying a minimum tax rate (more if they wish to participate in a building fund) and assessing all property at 100 percent of its fair cash value
- Limits additional revenue that a district can generate
  - "Tier I" funding allows districts to provide up to 15 percent above the base funding and the state will match these funds
  - "Tier II" funding allows districts to generate additional revenue (up to a certain level) that has been approved by popular vote, but this will not be matched
- To get KERA moving, state money will be avail able in the first two years (a 5 to 25 % increase) and for certain programs mandated in the curriculum and governance sections

Sources: Kentucky General Assembly (1990), Miller et al. (1990), Coe and Kannapel (1991).

Of these provisions, several were of particular importance for Central High School. One of the goals of this systemic reform was to couple centralized authority with decentralized decision-making. Several provisions aimed to democratize the stakeholder base by diversifying the kinds of people who had formal roles in the new school governance structures. Local people were to determine their own problems and to work together to address them. The fate of three of these initiatives which were prominent at Central High (e.g. curriculum reform, broadening the base of representation in school-decision-making, and using a superintendent screening committees to change the traditional process of selecting a superintendent) will be explored in depth in Section Two of this research. Therefore, they are worth introducing briefly here.

- *Curriculum Initiatives*

At the high school level there are numerous curriculum mandates and initiatives which were initiated with the aim of reshaping education policies and practices.

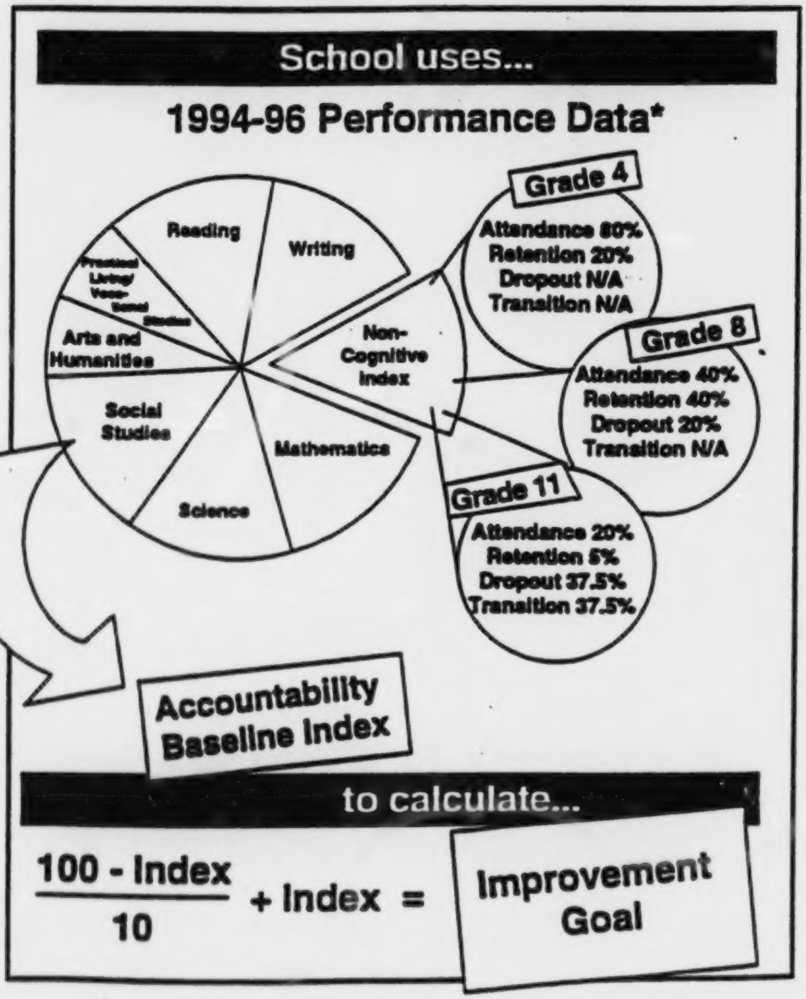
The most prominent and most important of these is the Kentucky Instructional Results Inventory System (KIRIS) assessment/accountability program. A school's accountability score is comprised of the results from a battery of subject matter and performance-based student assessments and measures of school level achievement. See Figure 2. on the next page for a schematic of this KIRIS score. Schools are expected to progress at an individually-adjusted rate toward an ideal of "100" at which all students score on at least the "proficient" level in all subject areas. Schools are encouraged to implement curriculum programs that prepare student to do well on these new tests.

KIRIS tests remain controversial and continue to be revised because they are tied to high stakes rewards or sanctions that are linked to the school's KIRIS performance. Schools that met their improvement threshold were slated to receive rewards. Those that fell just short but still showed improvement were to develop improvement plans and to receive help. Those schools that decreased their performance may be declared "in crisis" and were assigned help in improving. Under new KERA provisions, districts that consistently failed to meet their improvement goals were at risk of being taken over by the state and having the superintendent and school board removed and replaced by members appointed by the state board. These advisors would stay in place until the district had turned the corner.

Other curriculum initiatives included in KERA are: increased time for professional development that is linked with control over allocation of professional development funds at the school level through site-based councils; increased resources and support for implementing technology in the schools; an extensive program of "extended school services" which pay teachers to stay for after school and summer tutoring and enrichment programs; support for reorganizing the school day and/or year; Youth Service Centers (starting in the neediest districts first) to provide school-linked comprehensive programs in mental and physical well-being, drop out prevention, school success, career planning, and access to community services. Schools may take advantage of some or few of these initiatives.

Figure 2.

Kentucky School Accountability System


School uses...
1994-96 Performance Data*
Reading
Writing
Practical Living/ Vocational Studies
Arts and Humanities
Social Studies
Science
Mathematics
Non-Cognitive Index
Grade 4
Attendance 80%
Retention 20%
Dropout N/A
Transition N/A
Grade 8
Attendance 40%
Retention 40%
Dropout 20%
Transition N/A
Grade 11
Attendance 20%
Retention 5%
Dropout 37.5%
Transition 37.5%
Accountability Baseline Index
to calculate...
100 - Index / 10 + Index =
Improvement Goal

Source: Kentucky Department of Education, Office of Curriculum, Assessment and Accountability

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- *Site-based Councils (SBC)*

Participatory decision-making was seen as an essential component in making the school the primary unit of reform. By giving a team of parents and educators the legal authority to make decisions for their school, drafters hoped to help those closest to the children and local situation make the best decisions.

By January 1, 1991 each local board was to adopt a policy regarding school-based decision making (unless they were one of the few schools exempted because of excellent performance or district size). School-based decision making was to be implemented in at least one school per district (with few exceptions) by the 1991-1992 year and is required in nearly all schools by July 1, 1996. Thus this fieldwork took place at a point at which all schools needed to respond to KERA's governance provisions in one way or another. If a school subsequently reaches their KIRIS goal, they may vote SBCs out. SBCs must be implemented in schools were two-thirds of the faculty voted for it. The councils are composed of two parents (elected by all parents not just PTA members), three teachers (elected by the teachers), and an administrator/principal who serves as chair. Additional provisions for adding members if the those initially elected were not representative of the school's racial diversity of the district were added. Other people (students, staff) may be added as non-voting members, but this may necessitate adding more parents as there must be one-third parents.

Councils are responsible for decisions regarding instructional materials, budget, personnel assignments, curriculum, student support services, extracurricular programs, discipline policies, use of school facilities, use of professional development funds, and other elements of school-level management. Councils select the new principal when a vacancy opens up. Councils may also screen and interview candidates for teacher and staff positions, but the final decision rests with the principal and must be approved by the superintendent and board. The principal is responsible for being the instructional leader of the school and administers the policies of the district school board and her or his council.

- *Superintendent Screening Committees (SSC)*

Following the model established under SBCs, drafters of KERA aimed to give more power to teachers and parents in screening applicants for the superintendency of their district. While the school board retains the right to make the final selection, the SSC can play a perfunctory to very involved role in narrowing down the list of finalists. Superintendent screening committees are composed of two teachers (elected by teachers in the district), a parent (elected by parents), a principal (elected by the principals), and a board member. SSCs may do a preliminary background check, determine criteria for evaluating and ranking candidates, interview their finalists, and recommend a final set to the board. Considerable controversy remains as to whether SSCs should exercise their rights to rank finalists or to submit only one or two names instead of five or so to the board. The choices that the Hickory County SSC made are intriguing and will long be remembered in those mountains.

Areas of Contention

Several elements of the Reform Act made Hickory educational leaders and many teachers decidedly uneasy. In order to gain wide support in the legislature, reform proponents had to couple promises for increased funds with formal mechanisms for local district accountability to the state for the use of those funds. If the legislature was going to sponsor and pass a Reform Act that called for greater taxes and a redistribution of state moneys to benefit poorer districts, taxpayers demanded to know that their resources were going to be well used. The local educational leadership of Appalachian districts, used to almost feudal lord like powers to hire, fire, reassign, and determine policies at will, greatly resented the establishment of the independent Office of Educational Accountability (OEA) which was charged with monitoring compliance with the Reform Act. Further, they felt the provisions that defined and restricted nepotism, patronage, and political activities in the schools were specifically, and vindictively, targeted at eastern Kentucky districts.

The most disliked aspect of the reform, however, was the new powers granted to the state to intervene in districts that did not meet the new accountability standards. Superintendent McAllister summed up what many of the teachers and staff at Central felt was one of the real underlying reasons for KERA, i.e. bolstering the powers of the state under the guise of decentralization:

> But they didn't just stop at debating if money was all that needed to be done, they declared the whole system unconstitutional. They wanted to take it to the Supreme Court! That gave the legislature an opportunity to change, and get more control in an indirect way. Now the state has more control of the local district than they did before - they can take over a district. That wasn't previously legal.

The districts may now have the authority to make actual decisions, Hickory County educators argued, but the state had predetermined which decisions they were going to make.

The extent to which the state was going to peer into local business was unclear. However, school personnel were very suspicious that "the State" would try whatever means they could. One of the ironic outcomes of this suspicion was that staff at Central as well as in the district office were leery of introducing state-funded computers into their offices. For McAllister as well as others in his office, this technology represented an unwelcome intrusion on his long-standing right to make decisions without being publicly challenged or questioned. He criticized:

> There's more state control with KERA. With the computer system- they can pull up any transaction and look at any school in the state's attendance . . . that's more influence on the superintendent, and more control over the superintendent. They can call into question any superintendent's action.

In subsequent episodes in the process of implementing KERA initiatives and the technologies that came with them, other staff at Central showed a similar disdain, even animosity, toward the machines that they saw as a means of surveillance and, ultimately, of usurping their authority.

Funds Come to Central High School

Educators shared mixed reactions to the passage and provisions of KERA. Some were skeptical about the motivations behind the Act. Others were certain that the legislature and executive branches would never follow through with the funding necessary to make KERA meaningful. Many were stunned that the CBE and all others involved had pulled it off. Mrs. Collins, a staff member at Central, commented wryly, "I guess we got popular again. The 50s, the 60s, the War on Poverty, it's 'Give money to the hillbillies!' It's a politically good move." Whatever the underlying logic, she was glad to see funds pour into Central High; she wanted enough books for all her students, she wanted a computer, she wanted a reliable supply of copy paper for the photocopying machine, she wanted reliable heat in her classroom.

Since economic reasons were the original motivations for participating in the suit, Hickory County leaders did what they now had to do to get the substantial sums that were made available in the first years. Therefore, Central High got a site-based council. However, it is critical to note, as staff at Central were quick to do, that it was understood that this would be a relatively powerless body. It was instituted in name only so that the school could be eligible to receive the funds leaders had wanted in the first place.

Hickory County leaders were grateful and pleased with the significant funds sent their way very soon after the Reform Act and its concomitant funding initiatives were passed. They acknowledged that the state funds provided a needed supplement to enhance the local revenue base. Ironically, it is important to state that local property tax increases were also made possible through KERA. Even Mr. Evans, who was not at all a fan of centralized education, felt that these local tax increases had to be mandated from above for there was little chance of them being passed by popular vote in Hickory County.

They had plenty of needs for the funds. Mr. Evans described what they did at Central:

> Well, I thought the money things would definitely be good and it has been. [Our] county for example has gotten money definitely wouldn't have got and Central High has had I'd say close to $4,000,000. to spend. . . First of all they put a new roof on everything there, they had had buckets in the hallways and all that stuff, put new lockers in, painted everything, wired for TV, put in TV lines (Channel 1),. . . blacktopped all the parking areas, put new seats in the gym, new bleachers in the football field, new furniture in all the classrooms for kids, we did the bathrooms . . . put in new stalls, new fixtures, the whole works, dropped the ceilings, put in new lighting, general overhaul of the bathrooms. . . that's some of the things you can see. Of course we kept the staff at the same number even though we lost students, I guess we have about I'm not sure what we have now but I'd say we are about 10 overstaffed, and that helps your program. . .

Other schools in the county district received similar renovations, beautification and basic maintenance projects, enhanced technology, and parking lot (re)surfacing.

Another thing that was good about the Reform Act, in local leaders' minds, was that education had become a topic of conversation. Despite the negative side effects of reproducing some of the stereotypes about the Appalachian part of the state, overall, teachers at Central were glad that more attention was being paid to the many difficulties and achievements of schools in their region. Within Hickory county, Mr. Evans also felt that an important contribution of the Reform Act was making:

> the community, the people, aware of the importance of school. The newspapers had run articles almost daily on education and whether you agree with them or not that's not to me the most important thing, but. . . to get the people to think about education and they may agree with the article or may not but when you just keep talking about education on the radio, or in the newspaper, etc. I think people are more aware of the importance of education now than they ever have been in the past.

In fact, he assessed, "I think it's opened communication, in fact that might be where it has helped the most."

Exercising New Powers

Eastern Kentucky as a Target

One of the outcomes of KERA has been increased state attention to school policies and practices. As seen from the vantage point of Hickory County, it seems that the OEA and Department of Education have specifically focused their attentions on eastern Kentucky districts. "Oh, I think it's clear," explained Mrs. Jenkins, a former teacher who had watched the entire series of litigation, counter-lawsuits, and new legislation march by, "they're harassing eastern Kentucky because they filed the lawsuit."

At Central there was a pervasive sense that having antagonized the former Department of Education and Superintendent was the main cause for the state's ongoing investigation into the Hickory County schools. Added Mr. Lewis, a conservative teacher with a strong mountain dialect who preferred to close his classroom door and run his class his own way:

> Well this lawsuit that caused KERA to come was brought about by 62 or 60 some superintendents in school districts and practically all of them were from eastern Kentucky, and most of them were Republicans, and if you noticed every district that has been investigated is the same 60-some school districts that are involved. . . I don't think it was coincidence.

At a basketball game, staff and parents launched into a heated discussion, agreeing that felt that at least one of their neighboring counties had been subjected to a full investigation and take over as the result of personal grudges. Drawing on his own understandings of how (local) politics were assumed to work, Mr. Evans explained:

> Well, we have a state board, and its like a local board and sometimes you have people on the state boards that have an axe to grind with some of the people in eastern Kentucky. . . I think one of the school board members on the state board that came from eastern Kentucky definitely has an axe to grind and he's really gone after people in his own county. I don't know the man, but I think it's very obvious what he's doing.

Administrators were united in the opinion that this member was using his position in the state department to "get back at the superintendent there."

Seeing districts around them also come "under the microscope," the resulting climate in Hickory County was one of suspicion of the state's intentions to continue to investigate Appalachian districts. Residents were unclear as to what the future would bring to their county. But, they were certain, they had not seen the last of "the State" or "the people in the white vans" in their county.

"Out On a Vendetta"

Hickory County civic and business leaders from many different professions agreed with one of their peer's assessment: "The state's going out on a vendetta, they want another notch, like a gunfighter." The fact that this new enforcement body was headed by a woman was not lost on the almost exclusively male cadre of civic leaders. A pastor who met regularly with his friends in one of the few remaining sandwich shops downtown had this to say: "Penny Sanders is a leader, she wants to become Commissioner." "She's doing a great job of," and he paused to give the phrase the tone of contempt that he felt it deserved, "fer-re-ting out all the *ee*-vil!"

Local educational leaders cited a diffuse sense of distrust of these external evaluators as impeding the process. Mr. Lewis, a parent whose children had already graduated from or left high school, felt that his colleagues and neighbors were right to be skeptical about the state's recently renewed interest in Hickory County schools. As evidence, he cited the passive resistance exercised by the local populace when asked to come forth and testify:

> It was my understanding that the first group [team of investigators] in here asked for 120 people to comment on [the schools]. They couldn't get that many people. I don't know how many they wound up with, we'll say 25 or 30. Most of them didn't want to come, they thought it was a political game and didn't want to come. You'd have 3 or 4 [investigators] that were bent on finding something wrong, that's their job to find something wrong.

Reflecting the dominant attitude among outgoing and current teachers at Central, Mrs. Raleigh shared the sense that state officials were motivated to find something wrong:

> You can find something if you're looking for something in any school you go into, I always figure they'll find something if you actually want to. [Some local people] think that's its a big joke but it's a big power play in that.

But Mr. Evans agreed with others' inside assessments that the ongoing investigation would not uncover much if anything wrong:

> I don't think they'll find a lot. If there'd a been a big lot here, they'd have found it before now I'm sure. I don't think it would take them that long. . . [we were told there wasn't any trouble] other than some of the bus drivers, mechanics and janitors were getting too much overtime.

Despite what local educators took to be minor issues, not even "problems," the state interest had not waned. They continued to request data, statistics, and copies of rules and policies (if and when these even existed). Asked why he thought people liked to persistently focus on others' problems, Mr. Evans commented, "I don't know, [I guess] it's like watching a soap opera."

Mr. McAllister concurred and added that he felt that accountability officers were "just wasting money making that many trips, duplicating their efforts. The OEA and the Department of Education said the *same* things as the Management Assistance." The speaker was referring to a time about three years prior when a distinguished superintendent had come in and assessed governance of the county schools and made extensive recommendations for how the district could improve its schools. Indeed, the original OEA reports and the Management Assistance report are strikingly similar. The reason that the latter state investigation had highlighted most of the same issues is that the Management Assistance report had largely been ignored. Few of the suggested changes had actually been made.

County residents, including many of those who worked within the school system, expressed their belief that just because they lived in eastern Kentucky they were assumed to be guilty of *something*. Miss Gray of Central stated that teachers or administrators who had been accused of wrongdoing:

> have to prove they're not guilty and I think that's wrong. . . you shouldn't have to prove yourself innocent, you should have to be proved guilty, that's what our constitution says.

Others noted that in the current state of affairs, even if one's guilt was not assumed, prosecution could make it appear to others as though one was guilty. Mr. McAllister cited the case of one of his peers:

> The state can suspend people and you don't have to have proof. [Superintendent in a neighboring county] was one of the many who filed a suit, and he was called before an 'administrative hearing' before the state board.

In this climate of uncertainty and persecution, Hickory Countians looked for others to blame for their "problems." The Commonwealth of Kentucky as an entity served as a ready scapegoat.

The State as Culpable for the Problems

During the 1994-95 year, teachers and parents at Central repeatedly asserted that the state was actually the one who was responsible for the condition of their schools. The basis for this claim was that KERA would not have been needed if the state Department of Education had been doing its job properly in the first place. "If [Central's] such a bad school, why in the devil hadn't they been investigating before?" demanded Mrs. Robbins, a parent. Another parent who had been active in Central High activities asserted that certainly previous education departments had known about the dilapidated condition of Hickory County schools, but they chose not to do anything. Therefore, he reasoned, current blame had to be shared by the new Department administration. They had no right to persecute the local district for not bringing the buildings up to par or having low achievement levels if they were partly responsible for letting both decline in the first place.

Mr. Evans, in his assessment of where Central stood, reflected the common sentiment that the Department should have been more proactive in their caretaking of the schools:

> Well, I think Hickory County is typical of [unclear], and we've had a lot of schools that have never been mentioned or in worse shape than Hickory. We may be in worse shape than some that have been investigated. We've had a 'credidation program started many years ago, the state department used to come in and do this same type of thing on a school district but they didn't wait until the school district supposedly was in trouble! They had to have one every 4 years and to me I think districts ought to be audited every 4 years or every 2 years, whether there's anything wrong or not. And if there is something wrong, well, why wait until someone writes a letter?! [The letter of complaint] may be correct or it may not, that's why I'm saying its wrong.

State accountability officials from the OEA and representatives of the Department of Education had been to Hickory County frequently over the course of the year prior to this fieldwork. In the fall of 1994 they stepped up their investigation. The way that the state drew out and obscured their investigation of Hickory County's records and practices contributed to the animosity that was growing around the halls of Central, in the bus garage, and in the district office. Penney Sanders, Director of the OEA, sent a February 3rd letter of warning that she had discovered "numerous significant problems and irregularities were found that were attributable to the superintendent and also to the board." The fact that this accusation had come down in writing, did not contain any specific allegations or examples, and was not sent out to all schools fueled public animosity against the seemingly dispassionate, condescending, impersonal, and secretive investigators. The word that bounced angrily back and forth across the halls of Central was that the state was just waiting to launch a full scale investigation. "Waiting for what?" local people wanted to know.

The general feeling was that the state was trying to stir up local people against each other. "There's mistrust everywhere, people are all watching their backs," summed up Mrs. Cannady, a long-time Central teacher. "Something good can come [of this investigation]," hoped Mr. Allen, a teacher in another school in the district, "but to go one a year and you had more accusations before it started than you have now, I don't know."

Mr. Evans spoke for others when he declared that the endless waiting was severely complicating the process of moving on with reform. He stated, "I think [KERA] would be doing some positive things and I'm not saying they shouldn't investigate our county, but I'm saying if you investigate them, *do* something." In this interview in late March, Mr. Evans felt exasperated and declared that the delay was inexcusable. "Surely they knew what they were looking for. They had people in here off and on all year. This thing started what, in September?!" He was angry about the unexplained delays that only prompted him to think that there were underground deals being made. He argued for consistency, "If somebody's committed a criminal crime it seems to me that [they ought to prosecute somebody.] I don't believe the state department of the standards board or something like that ought to be above the law." He wanted them to prove something and discretely take action on it as soon as possible.

Administrators, teachers, school board members, and parents alike shared a distaste for the way that the investigation was being conducted. Some of the upper level leaders commented on how thrusting the district's problems into the public eye had only created an eyesore. Administrators were frustrated that in the void where official reports, constructive recommendations, or assessments might have been there was instead a proliferation of newspaper articles. Mr. Evans commented:

> Before the districts were even notified that they were going to have any kind of investigation we had newspaper or two and a couple radio stations saying that this was wrong in Hickory County, and that was wrong in Hickory County and I think it's wrong.

Mr. McAllister summed up his preference for the regional way of handling disputes, that is, face to face. In his assessment:

> It's better to handle things between people. You've got all these talk shows - well, [if he got put on one] the President wouldn't be President any more. After '72 and Watergate, the amount of respect for leaders has gone downhill in the national psyche. It's get whatever you can on those people. They're just jealous

> of people who's done more than they, who has got money, social position, recognition.

This superintendent lamented the decrease in public respect and impunity that he had been accorded in the past. KERA and the subsequent state attention on Hickory County and its neighbors seemed to be changing everything. He asserted that in order to be an efficient leader, one needed to be strong. To him, leadership meant that he did not micro manage; he was in charge, period. In summing up his contribution to the Hickory County schools over the last 20 years under his leadership, Mr. McAllister stated:

> I have conducted myself in an honest, straightforward way. I've managed to the fullest and given money for children. Don't think that I did no wrong, I've made mistakes. Anybody who tries to do anything does.

He resented the prolonged and aggravating state investigation and the way that it influenced the way locals and outsiders viewed his county and questioned his commitment to live up to his model of strong leadership.

As long as the threat of being taken over hung in the air, the climate in the mountains was sourly tainted. Teachers and their former colleagues were angry that as long as the investigation remained unresolved, students were the ones most stigmatized. Mr. Allen, who hoped that many of his brighter students would ultimately choose to go to college, felt that university instructors might respond negatively:

> For example, kids that are going to college this fall, if they put Hickory County Central High or [Inner City Lexington High School] or something on their record, I don't now about that. . . that's not going to be a good thing. If'n I were their professor and I saw they were from this school district or [county currently being taken over] or something of that sort, you know you are going to wonder, 'Well I can't help them much, they don't have much back ground' or something like that.

In making this remark, Mr. Allen assumed that these instructors would withdraw from students much like he did with students from his own area who were stigmatized because of what elementary school, hollow, or family they came from.

Summary

As this fieldwork commenced in the early fall of 1994, Hickory County and its flagship high school were in the throes of dealing with the fallout from the passage of the Reform Act. In addition to receiving the money they had hoped for all along, local leaders had to deal with the strings that came attached to this money. And the strings of accountability to the newly established OEA and the newly reconstituted Department of Education were being pulled tighter and tighter as the 1994-1995 school year went on.

Under the hovering presence of the state and the dark cloud of a possible full take-over, teachers and staff at Central were uncertain how to proceed and interpret the intentions of the Reform Act. Certainly there were welcome initiatives within KERA, not the least of which was significantly more money for renovations, equipment and enhanced teacher salaries. Even the most hesitant of KERA supporters in Hickory County admitted that the new funds were long needed. However, dissatisfaction with the speed at which the Reform Act was benefiting mountain education was widespread. Several teachers concurred that many people initially had unrealistic expectations. As Mr. Saylor, a patient and quiet teacher who usually kept to himself stated, "[s]ometimes some of them blow this thing up so big that people just expected so much out here and it takes time, you just don't change education overnight."

But reforming education in Hickory County demands more than cosmetic facelifts. Funds and energy need to be directed at the root problems. Some administrators and quite a few teachers privately admitted that they held out a faint hope that KERA - and possibly even the OEA investigation - might indeed have some longer-term benefits for rural Hickory County. However, they were unsure what it might be. Only one thing was certain, at least for the foreseeable future KERA was in Hickory County to stay. But now the emphasis had to turn away from those who had filed the original suit to those who had to do the hard work of making reforms work. As McAllister summarized:

> Before was a critical time there was more money at stake and so there was a lot of effort. But there's no changing KERA completely now. Now changes will come via teachers and parents versus through the school board and superintendent.

Indeed, while the state and upper level administrators continue to be involved, the stories of reform are largely tales of people who worked, learned, and visited the classrooms and corridors of Central High School. The next chapters introduce the atmosphere and key lessons to be learned at Central High School and then proceed to explore pivotal questions in what it means to gain a meaningful education in Hickory County, Kentucky.

CHAPTER TWO

CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

Introduction

Central High School is the centerpiece of Hickory County's educational system. Located in roughly the center of the county, its 1100 students are drawn from the far corners of this widely dispersed mountain county. Central High's campus lies at the critical juncture where issues of autonomy, identity, and authority intersect. It is one of the few county-wide gathering spaces, the place where local meets local, and local engages the state. As a result of the confluence of these streams of often competing interests, what happens there is high profile and high stakes. As a reflection of its host communities, life at Central embodies the ambivalence and contradictions that are hallmarks of schooling in this rural Appalachian county.

On the campus of Central High, students, faculty, and staff from widely dispersed neighborhoods come together to learn critical lessons about what it means to be schooled in these mountains. As Katy, a sophomore, observed:

> Our parents send us to school to learn, but we learn more than they know. Of course we learn study skills, but more importantly, we learn life skills. School can often be the first taste of real life for some students. Finally, they are exposed to the world and its conflicts. Naturally, they pick-up some survival skills along the way.

By observing the arrangement and appearances of the physical as well as social spaces around them, students learn vivid lessons about where they belong in Hickory County as well as relative to the world at large. At Central, young people learn how to build coalitions, find a niche to call their own, negotiate for special privileges, and defend their share of scarce resources. These are critical skills that serve the students well, for they are pivotal in understanding how the adults around them negotiate their own place, both within the social world of Central High as well as vis-a-vis the world beyond the campus fence. Thus this chapter establishes a framework with which to understand the faculty and staff experiences at Central that are the focus of the next section.

This chapter is organized around three sets of issues that are key to understanding student, and also adult, life at Central. In the first section I present an overview of the physical conditions that greet those who come to learn and work at Central High. I use elements in the main entryway as starting points to discuss the impact that scarce resources and certain long-standing practices have had on Central's social organization. In this section, I introduce one of the most important characteristics of life at Central, the division of the school into public and private domains. Further, I illustrate several of the ways in which the adults have largely withdrawn from responsibility for the public spaces.

The second section presents students' insights about how and why it is important to learn your place within the social hierarchies of Central's small world. Newcomers need to learn the unwritten rules about how to distinguish between groups, how to gain access to the more powerful cliques, and how to behave so as not to alienate others or challenge long-standing patterns of privilege. They also learn, sometimes painfully, the consequences of not respecting these rules. Finally, freshmen quickly learn that it is important to build personal, informal relationships with those who control access to resources, dispense favors, and administer discipline. For at Central, what you are able to get out of your education is closely related to what you bring to school, that is, your family name and connections, your wealth, your parents' involvement, and/or your athletic or academic prowess.

The third section focuses on how students act out conflicts. Although Central seems frighteningly chaotic to the infrequent parent visitor, the verbal and physical fights are actually very carefully choreographed confrontations that reveal key elements of how Hickory Countians approach and deal with conflict. This section looks primarily at the prominent role that physical assaults play in bringing to the surface tensions about status, honor, and loyalty that otherwise reverberate just below a thin veneer of civility.

Physical Places and Social Spaces

The Way In

The front entryway that greets arriving students this morning is the same one that greeted many of their teachers, parents, even grandparents when they were students at Central. The front entrance is made up of two sheet metal doors painted dark brown. They hang open nearly all day, slightly askew upon their hinges. In places the paint from an earlier color scheme shows through - brown, orange, below that green, one of the school colors. Several scraping marks are evident about shoulder high where the raw, rusted metal lies exposed. Students, whiling away the time before the first bell, used quarters and penknives to scrape circles and other shapes into these gates. However, as might be expected in other public schools, no vulgar language has been displayed to greet the visitor. On most mornings the doors are propped open with the two dented, metal garbage cans that are stationed by the entryway. On all but the coldest days, these remain in place the entire day, holding the doors open in a state of perpetual neglect.

Money has not been allocated to fix up this entryway for a long, long time. Nearly all of the hardware has been broken off. Neither door has the mandatory panic bar, the press bar that one would use to open the doors on a regular basis and that keeps the door from jamming in the event of an emergency. Neither door even has complete arms of what were once panic bars. One has a handle, but it clangs jarringly in a gear box that once held a locking mechanism, but now is only an hollow hole in the door. When the students destroyed the handles, no one remembers how long ago that was, the superintendent refused to allocate money to fix the doors or to bring them up to compliance with the fire code. The principal at the time did not press the matter.

Like many other events in Hickory County schools, staff are left only to wonder at the superintendent's reasoning. Never one to "micromanage," He would not give a reason for not allocating the money necessary to bring the door up to code. Instead the order came down stating that a sturdy chain should be sufficient. So for now, at Central, staff do as they regularly do, they make do with what they can creatively patch together. The make-shift closure consists of a heavy steel chain looped around a bracket that was welded onto the outer side of the door. At night the custodians take off the chain and, after peering down the halls to see if anyone remains, clasp the large Masterlock thus securing the building from the outside. Once locked in, there is no way to escape should there be an emergency.

Teachers frequently dispute the decisions made by their administrators, but do so almost exclusively when the latter are not present. One of the most common topics of conversation is the improvements needed in Central's physical plant. Teachers usually cite other financial priorities as the reason that the doors and other needed updates have not been done. Mrs. Wilkins knew where the money went, she declared on sultry August afternoon in the teachers' lounge, repeating the oft asserted charge that the increased funds from KERA's new SEEK formula have been diverted into the lavishly renovated district Central Office. Few dispute that the former home of the central administration was nothing to take pride in, but they can readily list many long-standing concerns at Central that, they believe, should have been given priority. There is plenty of speculation about matters such as the front door. However, as Mr. Rogers pointed out, such speculation is undercut by, as this social science teacher analyzed the situation, "learned helplessness." Teachers do not know why things happen, and, as new teachers come to learn, most do not try to make it their business to question those men who hold the power to reassign them to a less desirable school.

These front portals tell much about who controls access to many of the strategic resources at Central. The custodians are the gatekeepers. They retain control of the keys for this front lock, not letting others usurp their control of who is allowed access. The only other people, officially, who have keys are the principals and the security guard. Long before the first student is dropped off, the security guard, office manager, principals, and the early shift of custodians arrived and begin to prepare for the day. Now, as the students begin to filter in, the custodians can usually be found in the janitors' closet, with the door shut to prevent their cigarette smoke from coming out into the halls, or the noise of their radios or animated conversations from overflowing into the slowly awakening school. Those who need keys or supplies know where to find them and have to come to their space to make the request.

The custodians divide up the tasks for the day, a system arranged around seniority, personal preference, and daily mood. Faculty report that it remains a mystery to them how the custodians decide when, or if, they will patch a part of a wall where the plaster is crumbling off or the spot by a side door where the tiles have been coming unglued for months. All anyone knows is that these problems remain unaddressed, no one apparently accepting it as their domain of responsibility. As even the new principal, Mr. Newmann, soon learned, the custodians report directly to the superintendent. Requests for repairs or cleaning may be channeled through a principal, but the custodians have the ultimate say in what they will or will not do.

Coming to School

Meanwhile the students continue to arrive at the front entrance. While her two classmates jog out back to smoke, Crystal and the rest of Bus 34's occupants file sleepily off the bus head toward the main building. The fog is beginning to roll away, but the morning chill lingers and the steamed up windows of the classrooms are just steps away. They approach the main entrance, making their way past small clusters of boys gathered outside. Many mornings I join in these conversations, listening to students talk about the previous night's basketball game, their fix-it-up cars, and "who's full of it."

Students frequently talk about what it means for them to make the daily trek down from the recesses of the mountains. Marcus is one of these students for whom the daily decision to get up and come to town is a considerable accomplishment. Dressed in a blue jeans jacket like most of his friends, he leans reflectively against a corner of the building, his tenuous yet hip balance something he has practiced well. One of side wall of this brick school has a deep groove carved into it, the hole leaving the bricks precariously loose. Marcus works away at that spot most mornings before school. "It took me two years to do that," he explained proudly, gesturing at his small masterpiece. Most of Marcus' friends never thought he would last two years at Central. For Marcus, his notch is for him a poignant triumph, a marker of his need to persevere.

Standing outside the main entrance, the arriving students and teachers cannot help but become aware of the greasy smell of sausage dripping out of the windows of the cafeteria off to the right. Forty-three percent of Central High's teenage students qualify for free or reduced priced meals; at Hickory County's elementary schools the rate is closer to seventy-five percent. For a significant few, the school provides the only balanced, hot meals that they will be offered all day. Breakfast fare includes cereal, generic PopTarts, and, occasionally, thick gooey sweet rolls, pancakes, eggs, or biscuits and gravy, complete with the lumpy disks of fried sausage that overpower all other morning smells. Some students head through the main entranceway and directly down the hall to the cafeteria. Mornings, the large cafeteria is nearly always warm, a virtue not to be underestimated with the unpredictable, temperamental coal furnace that heats the school. It is also a place where most mornings Mr. Wilson and Miss Gray slide in and out of the cooks' workroom, getting their morning coffee in little Styrofoam cups before heading upstairs to their classrooms or to check their mailboxes in the teachers' lounge. I usually hang out in front, waiting until things calm down a bit and breakfast is put away before I grab my own cup of coffee and sit at the long cafeteria tables writing out fieldnotes.

The mingling of outside and inside, country and school that occur in Central's entry foyer symbolize the multiple roles that this consolidated school plays in the life of Hickory County. The slightly sickening, yet reassuring smells of the subsidized breakfast hover in the damp morning air, neither fully inside nor outside the school building. Central has been forced into an uneasy role as bridge between family and the world of work, between hunger of the body and hunger for opportunity. A few teachers resent the infusion of federal moneys for these subsidized food programs, charging that the only reasons their students come down to town is to be fed. Ambivalence about the potential of county residents are exacerbated by the obvious display of their need for external assistance, a condition that many find humiliating. As a result of the range of social services that the school alone provides to this persistently poor county, the school is a go-between that does not sit comfortably with either the mainstream of Hickory County or the mainstream of the "outside."

The doorway also serves as a liminal space, a strategic place of transition to wait for the school day to begin. This morning, Alex and Jim Wayne lean against the open front doorway, watching as their peers slowly filter in from the cool mountain air. "Hey, Co-orey!" grins Jim Wayne, knowing something of where his friend has spent the night. The three boys disappear into the growing crowd, heading off to their lockers to catch up on the news.

Public Spaces and Private Niches

Following the boys as they blend into the crowd of white T-shirts, baseball hats, and blue jeans, the visitor's eye is caught by the brightly blinking sign on the wall opposite the entrance. "Welcome to Central High School, Home of the Bears! ARRRGH!" proclaims a new electronic display board in running letters. This display board is one of several investments that the Youth Service Center (YSC) has made in an effort to generate more school pride and to communicate with the rare parent visitor. "All visitors must report to the office," the electronic greeter announces. This display is one of the new additions funded and installed by the director of the YSC. Established through KERA, this school-linked services center has quickly become a gathering point and resource for a wide variety of students at Central. One of their core missions is to improve the disastrous lack of school spirit.

The glitzy, moving display is striking not just because it is flashy, but because there are so few other hallway decorations that aim to inspire. There are no other banners or bulletin boards that proclaim the school name, or as in neighboring high schools, state the school mission. In fact, no one can name the school's motto, although teachers recall that they discussed it "ad nauseum" at one of the two faculty meetings called the previous year.

In this main building there are but five bulletin boards mounted in the halls. Only one was decorated at the beginning of the year. But its message rings uncanny and insincere, compared to what students experience first hand. The board is peopled with preprinted cartoon figures more appropriate for an elementary school, each holding a little balloon with a slogan like "make good grades" and "tell the truth." Here and there upstairs on the second floor, there are tattered posters taped to the walls, optimistically placed above students' reach. The slightly sarcastic message on one seems very appropriate. It is a reproduction of a Herman cartoon, with two cave men, snugly attired in fur wraps, pondering a wagon with stone wheels. The wheels are shaped like squares. The caption below reads, "D'yer ever feel you're on the verge of an incredible breakthrough?" As the product of an educational motivation company, a pithy comment has been added on the bottom. In bold letters it admonishes, "Keep trying! You can master that new subject."

Other than these few decorations, the public spaces at Central are devoid of personal attention. No adult claims these common passageways as their own, Instead, teachers retreat into their own classrooms, closing the doors behind them. The hallways belong to the students.

One of the other noteworthy features of the entryway is the locked Plexiglas case that is mounted on the wall to the left of the doors. A metal arm is clasped across the front, securing its precious belongings. This is the most public display of student work in the entire main building. Throughout the year, a rotating display of the art students' best works greet educator, staff, student, and visitor alike. The art teacher has selected several glowing examples of her students' work; a pen and ink drawing of a coal miner, dusty and tired, sitting on a wooden front porch, his lunch bucket by his side; a painting of a rosy-cheeked angel, her cherub's face ringed in golden curls; and a large poster of the school's mascot, a charging bear, each detail of the face alert and aware of the observer's gaze. These drawing speak of dedicated attention to detail, clear sense of composition and proportion, talent that promises much in t he future if only it is nourished.

These accomplished works tell another story about life at Central. For those students who find a niche, a teacher who welcomes them into the "Central family," their years at Central can be rich and rewarding. Classes where the students can create and pursue their interests in depth are oases where creativity can flourish. In these private domains teachers inspire, direct, and build bridges for students to new worlds of opportunity.

The well-tended art display case stand in sharp contrast to the empty light switch case just to its left. The wires have been torn out, the switch replaced with a keyed switch controlled only by the custodians. But the faculty don't seem to mind this subtle shift in control. They are in their classrooms. This abandonment of public spaces in favor of private places is a marked feature of academic life at Central.

One of the main ways that teachers at Central cope with the myriad demands placed on them, demands that they feel have only been exacerbated by KERA reforms, is, as Mrs. Fulton explained, to "keep my mouth shut and close the door." Mrs. Wilkins commented that as the teacher of one of the core subjects identified in KERA, she doesn't, "have time to read memos, no time to get involved - I have kids at home needing my attention too. So I don't do anything extra - I just focus on the kids - And aren't I right to put the classroom first? - I should be *here*" she said, pointing around her classroom, "and teach the kids. That's my first job." However, other teachers noted that theirs was a calculated decision not to become involved in the burgeoning number of faculty meetings (from three the previous year to almost weekly ones) and committee meetings. Concurred Mrs. Cannaday, another long time teacher, "I just stay in my little room and I don't know nothing." And, she added with emphasis to stress her desire not to know, "I don't *see* it, so I don't have to know."

Investing in the Future

From the ceiling above the entryway hang plastic conduit tubes, wires dangling from an open end, their looped ends dangerous as a noose. The school was supposed to receive a full array of computer hook ups as well as better cable reception over a year ago. Moneys newly allocated through the SEEK funding in KERA were to equalize the financial resources so that this district could create a computer lab as well as install computers at teachers' desks and in all classrooms. But the contractors have been slow, and the work remain incomplete. Fears about the legislature's commitment to continuing funding for KERA hang in the air. Perhaps the rewiring will have to wait until the legislative session is over to see if the state follows through. Such vivid reminders evoke memories of a string of broken promises from external sources to equalize opportunities and funds for the rural schools. Mr. Jenkins, gazing up at the reminder hanging overhead as he comes through the entryway, confided earlier that he thinks that "the Frankfurt people" have forgotten all about them back in the hills now that the election is over.

In teachers' meetings, and in their lounge, faculty complain about the physical condition of their workplace. Without secure storage facilities, reliable door locks impervious to tampering by custodians, or individual work rooms, teachers are forced to carry valuables with them. Classrooms vary greatly; some have cracked windows that cannot be shut completely, some have windows that no longer open. The intercom system blares clearly in some rooms, in others it can barely manage a hoarse crackle, and yet another set of rooms in one of the outer buildings never had a connection. The only people who enjoy long distance phone access are the principals and the YSC staff. The district will not pay the phone bill for teachers to contact the outside. This is a particular problem because a significant portion of Central's students live in an area of the county not in Central's local phone area zone; to call these families would mean extra costs. Fire alarms are tested regularly, but only nine rooms have emergency procedures posted. "The greatest limitation I see is that we work in a dilapidated and somewhat hazardous building," stated the frustrated and tired Mrs. Cannaday, "Students do not respect the facility and seem to feel that they are not worthy of anything better because we are unable to give the best to them."

When funds have been available, students and teachers know that they have not necessarily been used to enhance academic offerings. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the contrast between the gym and science facilities. Staff explained that it was important to the school to keep up with the neighboring districts; the main time other schools visited Central was to attend athletic events. Mr. Harris, a coach, defended this choice of investments, stating that the best chance most students from Hickory had to go to college was to win a sports scholarship. Therefore when others come to visit Central for basketball games, they see a clean and polished façade; a relatively new and spacious gym, brightly colored green and white wall, the school mascot, enthusiastic and coordinated cheerleaders, adequately well-provisioned teams with several coaches each.

In striking contrast stands the science lab in room fourteen. The science lab has one working gas line, and two faucets that regularly deliver water. The metal stools are in a state of collapse after so many generations of Central students. Young scientists share one or two pieces of electronic equipment. If they break beakers or test tubes, there are few extras to replace them. Mr. Bargo, a school board member angered at the condition of these labs, commented that it probably was this situation that:

> brought the state down here for instance. Something is wrong and it's just a known fact because they just arbitrarily do not come into a county school system 'til the last thing, I think a lot of that is brought on again by the fact that we haven't been up to date on the science labs. . . . you may as well have a coffee can with holes punched in the side of it and three red worms laying in the bottom. You got no running water, no heat, no lights. It kinda *looks* like a science lab if you just walk by the door real fast. But, it you go look under the sink the drains are unhooked. . . it's pitiful, especially when they got the money down there. What kind of virtue is it to hoard that money and the children needing that science lab? To me that's the same as a parent with a purse full of money and your child walking along beside of you that's hungry.

Downstairs in another classroom, the entire physics lab can be stored on two shelves of a metal cabinet. These bare provisions have serious consequences for Central students' ability to compete when they pursue advanced coursework in postsecondary institutions. Mrs. Allen, a science teacher, remarked, "we would like to have offered AP science classes, but when I found out the equipment that we would need to have, I knew we'd never pull it off." Most teachers try to do the best they can with the resources available. "If we had the moneys, we could improve the classroom atmosphere with upgrade' equipment, furniture, paint, and teaching aids," hoped Mr. Brewer, a long-time science teacher.

Despite often dire material conditions, many teachers have been able to create vivid, enthusiastic spaces where they take a stake in what their students learn and accomplish. Often they do this by turning their attention inward and closing off contact with, or responsibility to, the larger campus community at large. A vivid illustration is that each classroom door has a window to the outside, but many of these links to the outside have been purposely severed. Colored paper and cardboard are frequently used to block out the gaze of passing strangers or the roving eyes of the teenage boys who are out wandering the halls, looking to make contact with their girlfriends. Of course, this seclusion also provides the privacy for teachers to do very little. As Aaron and Rick recounted, one of their teachers regularly says, "'open to page whatever and start reading' and then sits back and read s magazine."

And until the 1994 change in administration, the principals did not consider it their business to frequently monitor performance. Mr. Brewer, citing the new administration's policy of regularly doing classroom observations, remarked, "in the [more than twenty] years I've been here this is the first time any person in the administration came into my class and told me he liked what I was doing, the first time a principal complimented me. A lot of teachers don't do anything and nobody ever said anything to them either."

A Patchwork of Progress

7:55 the first, "warning" bell jars the rumble of student voices awake. The pitch of conversations picks up, good tales being rushed to their exciting conclusions. Those students remaining outside come in and head to their lockers to drop off books and belongings, although coats will most likely be taken to class, as one can never know if that particular room is warm yet. Students crowd in around the lockers as two or more people often share in order to take advantage of the best locker spots.

As the tide of students begins to slowly recede, the hallway floors and walls begin to become visible. The walls are one of those indeterminate Crayola colors, yellow-green or green-yellow. Tiles cover the walls to shoulder height, filling in the spaces where there are no lockers. Standing out against this backdrop, are the bright blue lockers that are a relatively recent acquisition. On the outside of these lockers, there are almost no graffiti, although some students have running commentaries carved into the inner sides. Some of this they did themselves, but other phrases, especially those that use four letter words in a threatening way, are the work of other students. One remarkable thing about the lockers is that they do not have built in locks. Some students have brought their own locks, but most go without. Although there is some inter-student pilfering and occasional vandalism or provocative graffiti, students are proud of the fact that for the most part, locks are not needed. Despite the relatively low level of theft, students in the student council are pressing for locks anyway, citing the lack of security for advanced calculators and other school supplies that they had to provide themselves.

The tiles of the floor are also green, but a darker and more mottled variety. Especially in the main thoroughfare by the front door, many have ragged edges. Most of these gaps have been filled in with floor wax, temporarily sealing them down. There are spots were one or more have been replaced, the patchwork of mottled greens of the different patches leading like stepping stones down the hallway.

Coming to School, Part 2

Most students head off to their classes. A few use the tumult of this transition to slip out one of the many back exit paths off the campus; they have not come to town to go to classes. There are more than eleven separate ways off for those who want to leave the campus unauthorized, to "lay out" for one or more classes. This is one of the mornings that Ryan and Amber head "out back," making a bee line to the warmth of the exhaust grate from the coal furnace. There, behind the old stone gym built by the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s, they will join the dozen or so teens who are hastily trying to finish off their cigarettes and/ or marijuana joints. Ryan, with whom I have enjoyed many philosophical discussion, likes these few moments when he can join his buddies. Contrasting coming to school with the option of staying home, Ryan had frequently complained, "There's nothing to do there- it's bo-ring!" As with a small number of his peers, the school bus provides Ryan with the only reliable transportation that he has out of his hollow and into the relatively exciting world of the county seat.

While smoking and catching up, the students decide their day's plans. They include me, a regular participant in these gatherings, in their brainstorming. Today, Amber and four others plan to wait until the final bell and then dash through the woods to the edge of town where they will spend the day lounging together in the rock-walled "fort" that they built along the matted, soggy river's edge. Bored, they will perhaps later wander through local businesses in town. Although there are occasional incidents of shoplifting by these high schoolers, enough local business people tolerate, if not willingly serve, them. Nearly all of the formerly thriving downtown businesses have been devastated by commercial developments and fast food places along the new highway. They welcome what customers they can attract. It is the rare citizen who reports the "lay outs" *before* they have paid for and consumed burgers, or whatever the establishment provides, and before the "students" have begun packing up so that they can be gone before Central's security guard can make it over there.

Despite the allure of joining Central's high profile truants, all but a five students dutifully head off to their classes. This in itself is a task that requires a great deal of common knowledge about the building layout and key cliques and, sometimes, courage. New students need to know where they are going. There is a long-standing ritual of sending new students off on a wild goose chase if they are foolish enough to ask an older student where the classroom is. Even if they have a general sense of where to go, finding the right room is not always easy. On at least a third of the classrooms, the decals with the classroom numbers have been partly ripped away. Likewise, the "Mrs. Becker. Science II. Welcome to my Classroom" signs were removed soon after school began last August, with the comment, "well, everyone *should* know where they are going." For the dozens of students who transfer back in when their families are unable to find work in Cincinnati or Detroit or Lexington, this lack of signposts is particularly tricky. This is just one way that those inside reinforce to newcomers the importance of insider knowledge in successfully navigating around the people and resources at Central.

And it Begins Again

8:00. The ten minute homeroom period has officially commenced. The remaining students shuffle down halls, picking up speed only as their teachers reach out to swing the heavy classroom doors shut. The tousle-headed Kevin, always late, manages to squeeze in one last kiss with his latest girlfriend, before the two separate and she recedes the rest of the way into her classroom. Never one to worry about being counted tardy, he asserts with a knowing grin, "Bein' late is OK. They should be glad that I'm even here." In the hall lingers the heady scent of adolescence sexuality, aftershave too liberally applied, the sticky sweetness of lipstick kisses pressed against the mirrors inside lockers in hopes of good luck. In the drinking fountain next to the stairs are fresh wads of recently spat chewing tobacco, still oozing their addicting resin. On the floor lies a crumpled sheet of paper covered with algebraic equations, shifting to and fro against the base of the lockers, caught by the slowly warming breeze that drifts in through the open front doors. The hallways are nearly emptied now.

Another day at Central High School has begun.

Learning your place

Cliques and Codes

"Compaired to the rules of the school, Central High has many rules that are just understood among the student body. These rules are nor posted anywhere but as Freshmen you should know these." So began the introduction in a decidedly unofficial manual for new students that was authored by students in a keyboarding course. These upperclass students were asked to write guides for incoming students that would let newcomers know how the high school really worked. (There currently was no guide for newcomers, but this was clearly understood to be an exercise only, not what any new official handbook would actually state.) Wrote another set of authors, we have:

> learned over the years at Central a few 'tricks of the trade.' We have experienced the family atmosphere and closeknit relationships that will follow us throughout our lives. There has been a lot of unforgetable moments that each of us will always cherish.

In the discussions that I entered into with the authors, one of the most important ideas that the student writers want to convey was the importance of learning one's place.

Allison, a sophomore from a small hamlet in Hickory that bore the same name as her family, remarked that making the transition to the big Central High was often a frightening and confusing experience. Especially for those who did not have any older siblings, cousins, or parents who had successfully finished school, the challenge of striking out to high school on your own can be daunting. She wrote:

> Teenagers often quit school because they can't adapt to changes. Your first year of high school is the hardest. You feel like a outsider older kids pick on you. The school work is hardder. You have homework every night. You get confused and forget about your goals. That big high school feels like a prison you come to think

> the only way for you is to quit. So you do, what about your future? The next three years will get better you just have to face the facts you have to live.

When making decisions about the various options available, students see that the student body is clearly divided into different groups. There are more than three identifiable groups of students at Central, but most students tended to break the student body down into three broad sets nonetheless. On one end (the top end) are the "preps," those students who dress well and many of whom intend to go to college (hence the moniker taken from "college preparatory"). At the other extreme are the "skanks," those who are not as well dressed or at least not dressed in the same name brands as the "preps." These students enjoy the reputation of being dirty and smelly, although except for the telltale stench of cheap cigarettes smoked down to the last bit (which affect an equal proportion of the "preps") they are typically well-groomed and clean. In between are the "ordinary people," also known as the "nobodies."

The handful of students of color at Central have found places within each of the various groups. Although segregation of the African American students was enforced in Hickory County until the Brown decision, these students have been able to join in most activities at Central. African American students have been academic leaders, student council representatives, athletes, and artists. They are welcome in most social groups as friends. However, parents show considerably more unease than their children when interracial friendships threaten to become more romantic. Although white Appalachian students are frequently targeted by peers and teachers with taunts of "hick," redneck," "creek," these names are double edged, indicating both derision yet also a sense of camaraderie between speaker and accused that they share a distinctive and oppositional subculture. For example, as Sherri and Lori, two inseparable buddies, proudly announced when introducing me to one of their friends, "We're *hicks* and she's come to study us!" In contrast, African American students have been more likely than their white peers to bear the brunt of racial slurs and name-calling that have only derogatory intents (e.g. "nigger" as similar to "white trash"). Most students are quick to defend their friends of color and engage the offender, if a student, in a physical fight. "You should not be judged by your color, but what is on the inside!" Tara angrily remarked.

Although all but the weight room cliques are integrated by gender, the different groups are clearly divided by socio-economic status. Remarked the well-off Crystal, seeing the division that external characteristics based on income caused, "we should just try and get along. Just because you've got more money, it doesn't mean that you've got everything. . . try to get along with each other. Instead of acting like we got the whole world in our hands." Amy summed up the how one identifies those in the innermost circle:

> Teens that are athletes, rich, and well dressed usually consider themselves the 'insiders.' People that may be a little different or just wasn't born with a silver spoon in their mouth are usually pointed out as 'outsiders.'

In the unofficial guides, some students even listed, by brand name, the exact items of clothing one should wear to fit in with the "best" crowd. In an Sophomore English class the students completed essays about the implications of being either an "insider" or "outsider," Looking at the school and society around her, Lissa wrote:

> Insider means you fit in with the crowd. Outsider means you are a so called nerd and you don't fit in. This is how society takes these terms. In a teenagers eyes if you have money you're an insider and if you don't you are an outsider I learned these terms in school and from watching society. If you have a lot of money you have a lot of friends. If you don't have any money you don't have many friends. . . [I]s this an important thing here? Yes I think it is here at school. If you're an insider you have it made. If you get picked on all the time. Yes, I think being an outsider or insider matters at other places also. That's just the way society is these days. If you have a lot of money you are high in society. If you don't have much money you are considered as nothing.

There is a clear hierarchy whereby each group knows its place as well as how it can relate to others. Jennifer, who had friends in the middle and lowest groups, explained:

> There are three different kinds of classes her at Central High that base upon the insiders and the outsiders. The first class which is the 'high class' is the ones that mainly cause all of the problems. The second class which is the 'middle class' causes a little of the problems but not as much as the high class does. The last class is the 'low class' and they mainly get involved in the problems without wanting to. Even though they don't understand the situation. . . The 'high class' just wants to pick on everybody because they think they [that] there [they're] better than everyone else. The 'middle class' likes to pick on the low class to try to fit in with the high class. The 'low class' get's it bad either way they go and I don' think it's fair.

Several of the students I interviewed and talked to as part of their writing assignments believed that the matter of maintaining an advantageous social position was more important to those had something to lose. Mark wrote, "Each group has its insiders and outsiders, you can fall in and out, it mostly matters to those who are "in." Erin observed astutely:

> Here being an 'insider' or an 'outsider' mostly only matters to the people who consider themselves to be 'in.' With them I think it is how they wan to be seen and how they want to feel about themselves. I believe that it gives them a sense of power. As with the people considered to be 'outsiders', I feel that it doesn't matter as much to them. To me it seems like most of them don't worry about whether they fit in or not.

Inside and behind the school, student territories are clearly marked off by clique. Many smaller clusters of two to five also exist, but these groups have to find room along the halls in the buffer zones between the dominant groups. Whenever possible before and between classes, students gather, talking and leaning against the lockers that line the hallways. Holding on your own space in the hall is so important for some that, as Sean joked, "When the bell rings, the students run and stand in front of their lockers."

Finding a socially advantageous locker is one of the first things a new student must do. "The hardest thing in starting school as a freshman, is finding the most appropriate or available locker that you can find." Another set of authors concurred, adding:

> Choosing where to locker can be as important as choosing your classes. Although this may sound like an easy task, it is really quite difficult to choose the perfect spot to put your books. The best place to locker is upstairs. This is where the cool people hang out and locker. If you can, try to locker next to the steps, that way if you have a class downstairs your locker will still be close. . . Try to remain close to the main part of the hall [where the central stairs are]. This will help you to meet new people and get in good with the popular ones.

Other authors wrote, "you want to find a locker where some really popular people hang out. This is just in case you become really good friends with them this will enable you to get a pretty good reputation."

Learning to Fit In

It is not simply enough to position yourself well, students must also learn how to act to be acceptable, and hopefully, accepted. One of the most pressing concerns for freshmen is wondering if and how they will fit in. Finding out what groups exist and what the criteria for membership are often means striking out from the smaller peer group that one has had in elementary school and who are nearly all also at Central. Making the transition to new social groups without forsaking those who you knew from the K-8 elementary schools can be a tricky process. A set of authors advised:

> As freshmen many questions may arise to you about how you're gonna survive socialible at Central. You'll learn in just the first month that the social classes you where accustoned to throughout grake school will no longer exsist. Of cours

> there are little groups of people standing here and there but that will be true through out the whole world. . . The social aspect of lif at C.H.S. you will find to be very unique. But it's also like any other place, everyone has their seat in the world so you'll fit in somewhere. You'll gain many new friends that you wil charish for life.

However, another group warned, students should not build new alliances at the cost of sacrificing old, established relationships:

> The most important thing to keep in mind is never forget your long time friends. You are going to make new friends but don't forget your old ones sometimes old friends are the best kind of friends. Just because one of your new friends don't like your old ones this doesn't mean you have to stop liking them to.

These themes of fidelity and long-term commitment recur in adults' conceptions of what constitutes a good friend. One may leave or go to a larger setting, but you must not forget "where you came from."

Whichever group students aspire to join, they need to learn several key ideas about how to present themselves. These were expressed by members of all the different social strata. First and foremost, it was deemed important, especially for those groups lower on the social totem pole, not to act better than others. "Students shouldn't act as if you are better than everyone else. No matter how many friends you had or how popular you were in grade school that can all change when you enter high school." Many other pairs of authors expanded on this theme. One team of all female authors wrote:

> When you are entering high school there are certain attitudes you must have. First you must have a positive attitude and don't think you are beautiful and don't be stuck up. If you think you are better than everyone else then no one is going to like to hang around with you. You should think of yourself as an equal.

This code of behaving as though all students were equal is all the more poignant because students are keenly aware that all students are not equal. There would not need to be such an explicit ethic if there were not such real discrepancies.

The junior and senior authors of the unofficial manuals stressed the importance of not trying to assert superiority, whether based on family name, athletic ability, appearance, or wealth. Students were warned not to act "prideful" for they would, as the Bible warns, only be setting themselves up for a big fall. Further, incoming students are at least provisional outsiders, much like new teachers, especially those who few who are not from Hickory County. Both need to understand the significance of the unofficial rule not to stand out or propose changes that threaten long-honored hierarchies of authority. Readers of these unofficial guides were told:

> You can't come to Central as a Freshman and expect to rule the place. All the upper classmen have the advantages. They have experience and they already know their way around. Don't try to act big and older than you are or it will get you into trouble. Don't try to take over or you will make enemies faster than friends. Try and fit in and not be the big shot, at least not until you are an upperclassman yourself.

This code that newcomers should just keep their mouths shut, find their own niche, and wait until it was their turn is a characteristic of both student and adult life at Central.

Juniors and seniors are serious about enforcing the hierarchies that were oppressive to them, but now benefit them as upper-class students. One of the common ways that older (predominantly male) students assert their "rights" is through the physical hazing of other students. On their way to classes, freshmen have to be wary of entering the wrong part of the hallway before the clique owning that section has adequately dispersed. Although the hallways are a good eight feet wide, the bustling groups nearly block the passageways, forcing non-members to push their way through the increasingly crowded walkways. This domination of hall space creates prime opportunities for "racking," defined as older students striking younger students across the back of the head with their open palms. Although in the student code, only freshman are the officially sanctioned targets, smaller students who were not well known also reported that they continued to be "racked." Lisa said that students "are afraid to walk down the hallway because some boy is trying to show off for his friends and hits him over the head or knocks his books out of his hands." However, she expressed the concern that the traditional response of just accepting this cruelty may be changing. Alluding to frequent rumors (and some actual instances) of students carrying knives or even having guns in their cars, Cletus added, "When my parents went to school this was just a normal everyday thing. Now days you have to be afraid that the victim will retaliate with a different means of protection besides his fists." Nevertheless, upper-class boys were undaunted. Like Johnny Dean, they asserted their "rights" to rack. He explained, "[I say] let us rack the freshmen, because when I came to this school, I got racked and I said, 'Just you wait I'll get you, you [expletive].' Well, now *I'm* a senior!"

Other punishments have entered into the lore passed on to each incoming freshman class. Referred to with diminutive labels that belie the malicious intent, these include "twirlies" when a student is dunked into the toilet and "wedgies," having your pants pulled up much too tightly. Although they are actually infrequently used, they are judiciously applied to younger students who have yet to learn their place and stick to it.

Many of the (male) athletic teams also have ritual hazings, although they seem to be of concern only to those who aspire to join the respected cadre of that sport.

Another set of authors warned that students should be wary of those who stand out for they may lead the newcomer down an undesired path:

> there are a few people who try to act better than others. One thing you need to watch is the people that try to be seen, because they are the ones that try to cause all the trouble. It is also not hard to get a bad name, because everyone knows one another here at the big CHS and things get around pretty easy.

One of the other elements integral to this quote is the knowledge that gossip, the informal sharing of unofficial knowledge, is one of the main forms of communication. Until this last year, there was no written discipline code; you learned by experience what and when something would lead to trouble. Likewise, students keep close tabs on teachers as well as one another through highly effective networks of information gathering and dissemination. Which teachers were more than willing to have sex with incoming students, which teachers are able to explain things well and "don't put you down," which counselors to trust with personal information, which staff members have access to marijuana, which bus drivers to ask to drive for long rides for sports tournaments are all relevant bits of knowledge that students share with one another, both for reasons of personal safety and satisfaction as well as for access to desired goods.

But gossip also serves to keep students in their place, and to create difficulties for those students who either break student codes of conduct, or who are unacceptably different. "When you're different if you don't go looking for trouble, trouble comes looking for you," stated Lizzie, a student who was ostracized for her personal beliefs and appearance. She did not find a home in any student group, so she floated around the halls, hung out with the staff in the main office for hours at a time, and in general tried "to stay out of the way."

Cultivating Strategic and Supportive Relationships

A final aspect of finding your place is understanding how critical it is to have personal relationships with power holders, including adults, in smoothing your way at Central. Most of the students seek close and meaningful relationships with teachers, even if they might not admit this need upon an initial interview. But in getting to know even the most marginal of students, the hunger for personal recognition and respect is gnawing away at them. Many students do indeed find meaningful mentorships somewhere along the way. Several teachers felt that in this small county, they best thing that they could do to make a difference was to reach out individually to teens. A substitute who had taught in various settings, including inner urban schools in the region, compared the kinds of informal attachments that she frequently saw at Central with what was considered the "proper" response elsewhere:

> In city schools there's a detachment - a professional distance. But here, I don't know what it is, maybe a small town mentality. Kids'll come over to you, cut up [make jokes] with you. Maybe they know you or your relative or know you from another setting - but here there's more *relationship.*

She admitted, however, that this ideal of multiple ties was not available for all students. While some students referred enthusiastically to their "Central family," others have quite different experiences. One child may realize that he is indeed the favored son, while another is, at best, only a poor cousin.

Students are treated in very inequitable ways when it comes to discipline, punishment for skipping class, late work, and special privileges. Although the official standard is for equality before the law, no one believes this to be the case. How one is treated depends a great deal on who his or her allies are, and what is believed to be true about the individual and her or his family circumstances The implications of this inequality will be given more space later, but for now two examples may be helpful.

Teachers as well as students know that the consequences of misbehavior differ. They also realize that their colleagues are complicit in this problem. As a result, teachers are less inclined to enforce the rules within their own classrooms, thus exacerbating the cycle. As Mr. Evans noted, "A lot of this comes back to teachers - they're a lot of the problem. They don't back up the administration. If it's Joe Blow they just let it slide." Those students who aim to take advantage of their connections "know it's no big deal to go to the office" observed Mrs. Raleigh, adding, "all students must be treated the same no matter if they are an athlete or the child of some prevalent person by all the principals." Teacher were upset that sending students to the office seemed to produce no quick fix to their problems. Complained Mrs. Cannady on a survey:

> It just gets filed away on a piece of paper - but nothing gets done by the administration. Teachers think, 'why should I turn in a kid for smoking? That'll just make the kid mad at you.' They have give up, 'cause they see nothing come of it. They need to see a result.

And students knew which of their teachers had given up.

Whether the infraction is minor or major, most students felt helpless to overcome the system of privileges that they saw work to the advantage of a select few of their peers. In an exercise in which juniors were asked to practice writing a formal letter to the new principal (which was never sent), the quiet and astute Brian eloquently laid out one of his greatest concerns:

> There are people in this school, boys and girls alike, who simply love to fight. It seems as if they are constantly looking for a fight everywhere they go. These people have no place in our school. Yet because of administration that is too easily influenced by the irate parent, or the voter, or the sports coach who serves to protect them for the team, they remain. I ask you, sir, can we compromise our schools safety because of the demands of a few parents? Can we compromise it for political reasons? Can we compromise it because someone can play a sport? This is what has happened in the past, will you too let it happen?

Acting out conflict

Choreographed Chaos

Chaos reigns at Central High. Most people just try to work their way around it. For those who return day after day to this high school, the noise, jostling bodies, frequent physical confrontations, and flagrant abuse of the "no public displays of affection" rule become commonplace, more an obstacle to navigate around in the five minutes between classes than a shocking experience. But for the very few parents who dare to visit the school, the rumors that they hear at church and in the grocery store, "Do you know they have sex in the middle of the hall, drugs in the classroom with the teacher right there?!!" while clearly exaggerations, must seem to carry a grain of truth.

Parents were frequently aghast at the ethos of direct confrontations so prevalent at Central. One Tuesday, I was playing my common role as guide for visitors, leading a wary mother up the stairwell and through the bustling crowds in the hallway. Perhaps I should have waited until the class change was over, but I was so used to the tumult that I did not anticipate her anxiety. On her way to see the principal, she and I encountered a shouting stand-off between two girls, who, ringed with their respective cliques, were gesturing angrily, one girl's fist barely missing a nearby twosome. The two young lovers hardly noticed, as they were busy coupling, hard pressed up against the lockers. Teachers pushed past us through the narrow openings in the moving crowd, busy trying not to see the heated confrontation around them. The mother looked alarmed; I assured her that we were almost to our destination. "I just don't know about this place!" she exclaimed once inside the quiet and safety of the vice principal's office. She went on to tell me how she had gone to high school here for one year herself, but she could sympathize with parents who would rather withdraw their teens from school entirely than send them off to this relatively unknown and seemingly uncontrollable place.

What may appear to visitors as an uncontrolled chaos is actually an intricate, complex array of skillfully choreographed confrontations, whose rules become apparent only slowly as one enters deeper and deeper into the social life of Central High. In the tight and confined spaces of this consolidated school, young people from all over the county are brought together. Arguments, grudges, jealousies, and rivalries that spring up in the furthest reaches of the hollows, pool halls, bootleggers, and movie theaters are brought to town with them. While neighboring high schools have almost eliminated such violence from their grounds, it is a weekly event in Hickory County. For the rules and expectations are such that it is at Central High, rather than some other place, that conflicts are publicly managed. The stand offs between students (who are only infrequently armed with knives and rarely, guns) are rituals of complex meaning, played out in public with certain rules, expectations, and criteria for success. In many ways, the bodily assaults between students, as well as the less physical yet equally powerful verbal duels, are expressions of long-standing social codes of honor and identity.

Adults in the school are involved in students' conflicts both voluntarily and inadvertently. They may be a intercede in a physical assault, enforce disciplinary rules, provoke a confrontation in their own classroom, encourage students to flagrantly disobey rules, or counsel students to buckle down and mind their own business. The roles that they play in students' conflicts are in many ways extensions of their own involvement in confrontations between adults. They model for students the rules, and ambivalence about these rules, that govern their own lives. Although exceptionally few fights between the adult members of the school are played out physically (with the possible exception of sporting matches between men in which physical contact is expected and highly regulated), many of the underlying rules about enacting conflict are the same as those they learned when they themselves were students at Central High School. Core concepts remain the same; the mores about what constitutes a worthy cause, the importance of defending one's honor and privileges, repeated testing to see that one's friends will be there, the role of verbal ridicule and ritual insults, and the domino effect linking a seemingly innocuous event with a more serious confrontation years later. Adults' methods are more subtle, their actions less public, and their confrontations less physical, but their enactment of conflict is no less serious.

Lasting Implications

The implications of one's behavior at and during high school can last a long time, perhaps even a lifetime. In this county, I was told, "memories last as long as the mountains." "*Longer* than the mountains," my lunch mate corrected herself, reminding both of us that even the mountains can be torn down through strip mining and new highways. Sophomores in an English class wrote about how negative feelings can plague the originators and their antagonists for a long time. "Hatred is like a line, it never ends," wrote Terrance. "Jeaolousy is like a disease without treatment. Both can tear your apart" added Craig. Wrote the team of Lisa and Melissa, "Conflict is like a strand of pearls, it goes on and on, sometimes conflicts between people is like on a strand of pearls, you have one right after another." "Hatred is like a blazing fire, if given the time they both burn until theres nothing left," offered Joe-Ellen.

Just like negative sentiments, positive associations can also endure. During their years at Central, students are laying the groundwork for the stories that they can draw on for years. Whether in the bus garage or on a superintendent screening committee, adults refer to trusted friends as people who have always been there for them, often extending even before their high school years. Teachers refer to cousins and colleagues who have a long history of backing them up. Likewise, in the many gathering spaces around the campus, students "tell stories on" others, recounting how a friend stood with them in the face of a verbal assault or even a series of knife attacks. Often these valued friends are close by; the retelling of the encounter reinforces the bond between the two as well as warns any potential challenger of the coalition he or she would have to fight. Tales of two-faced friends, those who abandoned them for higher status cliques, or female adversaries who stole their boyfriends, are key components of teens' conversations that make explicit to newcomers the mores of solidarity between friends and cousins as well as the repercussions for infidelity.

In one of a series of metaphor writing exercises with the sophomore English classes, students wrote about abstract concepts that mattered to them. The teacher, students, and I then entered into a dialogue sparked by these writings that related their metaphors to their lives at Central and in Hickory County. One of the most frequent topics was their very salient concern with how one managed conflicts, especially those that erupted at school. These encounters were everyday occurrences that had to be confronted and victoriously overcome if one was to live in the area and have a future with respect. These metaphors offer intriguing and rich starting places for explanations about what managing conflict means.

Many saw interpersonal conflict as an inevitable, if not natural, part of social life. Drawing on his Christian concepts of humans' sinful nature, Tyler wrote, "Hatred is the monster that lies deep in the souls of everyone." Asked to explain their comparisons for a supposedly naive audience, the students added further descriptions. He explained, "Every person has the capability and will greatly dislike someone." "Jealouy is like a mad dog you couldn't control it. You can't control your jealosy and you can't control a mad dog," added Robbie. When called into the principal's office, male students were especially likely to state that they just get angry and can't control themselves. In similar ways, adults absolve themselves of personal responsibility by evoking excuses like, "well, that's just the way we/they are here," or "it's just different here, outsiders just don't understand."

Conflicts Bubble to the Surface

As the county's consolidated high school, Central brings together students of a range of social classes and family standings. Encounters often bring to public attention differences in social and economic hierarchies. Making a public display of one's privileges and relative standing in the community is a goal for many, especially those "preps" who have the most to display. Thus a few students, supported by their parents, cruise the county in expensive cars and souped-up pick up trucks that cost more than the average family income in the county of $15,412. (United States Census, 1990). "It's all about image there," complained Mrs. Smith, who daughter had recently requested a very expensive prom dress. "At [Neighboring] County, it's not like that, kids'll buy second hand and go to the prom to have fun. But that'd never fly at Central. You have to put out, so your kid will have an image. It's about your place in the community."

While such displays come to a peak on those formal occasions, they are just as prevalent on a daily basis at the high school. In fact, most conflicts do not arise out of proms and singular events, but rather from the litany of small occurrences that stack up day after day. Those who cannot afford, or who do not wish to invest in, designer jeans, jackets, and polo shirts have to walk the gauntlet of the those cliques of well-dressed athletes, socialites, and "the popular ones" who control the upstairs hallways. Often they encounter taunts of "Skank"! or "Creek!"

In discussing their metaphors, students felt that the explicit comparisons made between students served to exacerbate differences, especially those based on economic well-being, that students felt hard pressed to overcome. "Jealousy is wanting what you can't have. The longer you can't have something, the more you want it, and you become jealous of the person who has it," wrote Jessica. But others noted that not all students let others' displays of advantage bother them. Rachel added, "Jealousy is a person who is jealous of everyone elses and not proud of what they have and what they are."

Physical confrontations between students can erupt spontaneously, but they are seldom unpremeditated. Often a teen will feel out her or his friends, asking, "Who will go with me to kick her butt?" or "I need to teach him a lesson!" Knowing that you will have someone to stand by you, and if not fight with you, create an environment in which no one else will intervene, is often a prerequisite for students who are looking to even a score. Sometimes fictional confrontations are proposed, offered as tests to determine who you have on your side should support be needed. "My friends here are like a building because they stand with me no matter what." wrote Crystal and Alicia. "Conflict is like friends they have a way of coming around." explained Melissa to which her partner Ryan added, "Conflict gets around no matter where you are your friends will always be there."

Fights in which the aggressor announces her or his intentions by calling the other girl a "bitch," or "whore," thus implying the kind of transgression, or the boy a "fag," a generic insult, are considered to be properly announced. Teens who escalate tensions too quickly by kicking the still-sitting other in the head, "sucker punching" from behind, or not announcing a reason through their insult, are not respected by students who later discuss the incident. They are also more severely punished when the two or more involved finally are brought to the principal's office.

Although a few fights are "called out," that is , the adversaries agree to meet, most often the instigator will go over to the other and ritually begin the confrontation. Entering the other person's territory is a risky business. Often groups of friends are clustered together, talking. However, part of the understanding of being a friend is giving your friend the opportunity to respond to a challenge and defend him or herself. As long as the opponents are considered a "fair match," that is, equal in number and neither armed, peers will most often create space for the challenge to be acted out. "Give them space, give them space!" is an often heard remark, as a large circle forms and students, answering this call, come running to see the blows fly. "Cat fights," physical altercations between girls, are considered to be at least as brutal as those between boys, because students feel that girls will do anything, including pull hair, scratch, bite, and kick. The tufts of bleached brown hair that have been left on the hallway floors more than a few times after a fight show that this is indeed the case. Occasionally, other students are pulled into the conflict, receiving either blows, or hurt trying to intervene when the sides become uneven. Jim Wayne remarked through his metaphor, "hatred is lick a war. inusent people alway gyet hurt."

An Ethic of Non-Involvement

Students are clearly taught by their peers that they should not become involved in others' business if that person is not a close friend who has requested help. In lunch time discussions and in hallway jokes, older students tell of unwelcome intrusions on others' rights to assert their independence and stand up for themselves. In one of the unofficial student guidebooks, a team of students explained for the benefit of their hypothetical freshman readers:

> When it seems you are approaching a very bad situation, (such as a fight) and the part of you that insists on being in the middle of things tries to take over, don't let it. Even if you have to start beating yourself over the head to get that nosy part of you to settle down, do it. If you fail to do so, and you try to get in the middle of that bad situation, you will find that four fists will be coming down on you instead of just that one. So you see fellow freshpeople it is better to avoid these bad situations instead of putting your two cents in it. Unless of course you find a thrill of having fists meet your head and in that case you have my blessings and I hope you enjoy your beatings.

Other teams of authors legitimized the ethic of non-intervention as not betraying confidences or information. Shawna remarked that sometimes students are caught in the middle, asked to bear the burden of enforcing the rules when teachers were not present at their hall duty, having walked away from their responsibilities in order to chat with friends, get coffee, or grab the time to use the bathroom themselves. Speaking to a principal in an essay, Shawna wrote, "I know that you think we the students should tell on thouse who do it, but you must understand we can not tell on someone, because then that would cause another problem." Another group made the ethic of non-intervention and sticking together clear, "Do not RAT OUT ON ANYONE! Play dumb and people will love you." However, they continued in a very serious tone, "Don't be so [expletive] nieve about everything that happens and what other students do."

The patterns of teacher interventions in students' fights exemplify the ambivalence that Hickory County adults feel about the sometimes tenuous balance between public civility and the assertion of individual or family status. Officially, teachers are expected to intervene immediately in student fights and bring all offenders to the main office. However, there are several main reasons that they frequently do not do so. First, teachers take time to assess the severity of the situation as well as how much the conflict is escalating. If the students have had sufficient opportunity to prove that they will indeed respond to a personal challenge, a teacher would be more willing to intervene. Enough time has elapsed for the students to defend their honor, but not enough for lasting harm to have been inflicted. After all, the main objective of the fight has already been accomplished. Second, some teachers feel that students are better off "getting it out of their system," there and then, not taking their conflict to the pool halls, neighborhood stores, or private homes, but declaring their anger in a publicly supervised setting. Third, teachers, especially women, feared for their own safety and expressed the desire to wait for a critical mass of teachers to come over before entering the fray. Fourth, pulling just one student away from the other is likely to only provoke the unfettered one to attack the restrained one as well as her or his holder. While a teacher may dive in to pull out the fighter he or she cares most about, e.g. a niece or a special student, this may actually backfire and leave the "rescued" student in a more vulnerable position, unable to defend him or herself. Thus at least one teacher per combatant is needed. Those teachers who are present generally wish to uphold the official discipline code, but not at the expense of themselves looking foolish or incompetent, or even getting hurt.

Fighting Unequal Battles

Physical confrontations are not limited to those between students. Nearly every day I shared my observation spot on the sagging padded bench in the main office with students who had been sent (or, less often, physically brought) to see a principal. Most of these students had overstepped the bounds that separated teacher and student, yelling at, rebuking, threatening, or even striking a member of the faculty or staff. As we chatted about their only slightly embarrassing banishment to the office, many would eventually relate the incident or chain of incidence that had led up to their violent explosion. "I won't sit back and do nothing when he [the teacher] runs his mouth at me like that," asserted Chris, expressing the concern shared by many of his counterparts, both male and female, that he had been backed into a corner and had no honorable option but to defend his name and self-respect.

Chris' case illustrates the many layers of self-denigration, transferred anger, prejudice, and abuse that some mountain students receive at the hands of a small but significant number of their teachers. While his case is unique, the conflict underlying it was common and most students could cite a similar conflict that they had witnessed. Chris had been sent to the office for throwing a chair at Mr. Gilbert, his teacher. The instructor had asked the class a question, and Chris had answered, mumbling because of uncertainty. Mr. Gilbert questioned him to repeat the answer, and when he did so more audibly, Mr. Gilbert had mocked him, chanting in sing song nonsense syllables an unflattering imitation of Chris' answer. When Chris attempted again, Mr. Gilbert repeated the mocking chant, adding, "I hate them damn country accents!" Chris then threw the chair at him. Like nearly all of his classmates, Chris speaks the regional mountain dialect, a fact that he does not feel he should have to apologize for. To him, publicly showing to his teacher that he would not be denigrated because of a trait that marked him as belonging was more important that letting the verbal abuse go unchallenged. A colleague of Mr. Gilbert's, reflecting later on the incident, offered that perhaps this remark was something that his friend had heard himself when he and his family had moved from the mountains to look for work in Cincinnati in the late 1960s. Upon returning "home," Mr. Gilbert brought with him internalized anger and derision about those traits that had made him a target as a teenager.

Male students like Chris were more likely than their female peers to deal with conflict through physical retaliation. As a consequence they were more likely to be sent to the office, assigned to detention, and when these did not create a change in the long standing problematic relationship, encouraged to simply hang out in the gym and not return to that teacher's classroom. The physical education teachers, all men, were understandably concerned about the tendency for their charges to grow in number over the course of the semester. "It's like refugee camp in here," complained Mr. Harris.

Summary

Central High School is both setting and symbol (Fitchen, 1991) of Hickory Countians' ambivalence about their school's place in their community. On one hand, it embodies the chance that Hickory Countians have to offer their children the skills, attitudes, and relationships that will enable them to become valued members of their communities. On the other hand, the deteriorated and abandoned public spaces of the school, provoke students and teachers alike to ask just how serious these commitments are.

Students learn many important lessons during their years at Central, whether they last for one or four. Many of these they then use to set standards and codes that they will use as guides for their adult lives as well as to measure the behavior of the adults around them.

Students learn about salient differences: that it matters where you come from, what your name is, and what clique you are in. Students learn early on that not everyone is going to have an equal share in what precious few resources there are, whether these are textbooks, calculators, Honors classes, cheerleading positions, etc. They learn that it is best to cultivate a personal relationship, a special niche for yourself and your friends, and form teams and relationships to get what they need and want. Whether you will be harassed if you attempt to use the library after school, whether you can feel comfortable going in to see a guidance counselor or use a weight room, whether you will be able to leave school grounds at lunch time and bring back a Hardees lunch for your favorite teacher and yourself all depend on whom you are aligned with.

Students learn to identify who their peer group is and then to take care of one another. They arrive at high school knowing that this is where many people forged relationships that have endured. In their homes, churches, neighborhoods and school, teens see models of friendships that have been forged in early years that have stood the test of time. They have heard uncles, older sisters, and cousins admiringly "tell tales on" friends about tough times that they faced together, silly pranks they pulled, and scrapes that they saw each other through.

Through the freshman trials of trying to locate their classrooms to the senior rigors of determining what the next step in life might be, teens rely on one another to find their way through the bustling, often chaotic world of their consolidated high school. Young people learn how important it is to have friends who will steer you right and stand by you even if they think you might be wrong. They learn that it is critical to assess the strength of your connections before you take on a fight. And they know that these relationships depend on reciprocity; their friends will call on them when they need help too.

Part of learning to take care of your own group, is taking an active part in defending your own interests. Central High students also learn that teachers and other students will tolerate, even encourage, them to enforce the long-standing hierarchies that keep underlings in their place. For instance, "racking" is seldom challenged, and is largely ignored as an unfortunate, if inevitable, way for seniors to finally "get their due."

Newcomers learn that the "ideal" way to deal with conflicts is to confront your adversary directly. Although physical confrontations are not officially sanctioned, they are almost considered obligatory among most students. Dealing with things face to face, on a one on one basis is considered the most courageous, honorable way to resolve, or at least confront, the conflicts that divide people. While certainly not all conflicts are brought out into the public spaces of Central, there are advantages to ritually engaging your adversary in a publicly-observed fights. Whether they are winning or losing in the time available before adults intervene, both students will have won if they prove that they will stand up for themselves, their families, their name, their friends, their romantic interests, etc.

Students also learn that a great deal of conflict can be generated and escalated through indirect means. Whether teenagers talking about why a certain girl is no longer in school, or teachers theorizing why the floor tiles have yet to be fixed, gossip is the major means of creating information and sharing theories about why things happen. Sharing information is also a key way to gauge your social status; only those with the right connections are let in on the inner circles of those with "knowledge." Gathering in private spaces provides important, alternative means of creating relationships and solidifying mutual dependencies. Although creating gossip about an adversary is not respected as much as directly confronting that person, students acknowledge it may be their best option when the other person is bigger, more well-connected, or can marshal a large following.

Students who test the bounds of school rules also learn how important it is to have a face-to-face working relationship with those in positions of authority. Students learn that who you are and the relationships you have established are key in determining to whom you answer, or if you will answer at all for "bending" the official rules. Students learn to strike a balance between how much autonomy they can exercise and when they have overstepped their bounds.

Those who work and learn at Central also come to realize that there are differences between what people say face-to-face and what actually happens. Those who have been there any length of time cultivate a healthy degree of skepticism that promises for technological improvements will be fulfilled, equal treatment of all students followed, or rules against fighting enforced. They learn, like their teachers, to make do with what they have at the moment, and not wait for someone else to make things better. They find out which custodian has the needed keys, which principal decides who can use resources, which coach has dibs on the equipment that the school owns.

Newcomers also learn how they are expected to behave if they are to be acceptable and, eventually, accepted. First and foremost, they learn that they should not act like they are better than others, particularly those who came from the same grade schools or same hollows. Underclass student are encouraged to watch and listen, and only slowly assert their own individual style. Teens are told, "that's just how things are here," and admonished to forget efforts to change patterns that have been in place since before their parents attended Central. Through their daily interactions in the hallways, classrooms, and bus rides, these young adults experience the continuity between what they expected to find at Central, and what they, in turn, recreate.

Students learn that it is dangerous to act as though you have all the answers, know of a better way, or that you are not satisfied with the way things are. Instead, they are encouraged to retreat, as they see their teachers do, into private spaces where they can pursue their own ends without challenging the dominant social scene. Asking questions may be a dangerous and fruitless endeavor; it seems best to keep your head down and keep your mind on your own business, whether walking down the hall or sitting at a desk. It is fine, even admirable to create a niche in which you can pursue friendships and discover your own talents, as long as you do not appear to be better than others. At Central it is best not to make waves if one wants to enjoy a calm place to pursue excellence.

However, students warned one another not to be naive; they should know what is going on. But, they should be judicious in sharing what they know. Part of the power of having in knowledge was deciding when and with whom to share it. While students openly discussed their school with friends and trusted acquaintances, they internalized the unwritten rules not tell on their peers to outsiders, adults, or other authority figures.

A final lesson that all those who come to Central share is the recognition that their school is not all it could or should be. Everyone agreed that reforms were overdue; the building needed fixing, the bulletin board needed updating, the system of privileges needed addressing, the violence needed curbing, the curriculum needed to be more challenging for a greater portion of students, and more. However, those who benefited from the way that public spaces were controlled, social hierarchies were defined, and conflict managed had a clear stake in maintaining these ways of establishing and enforcing their privileges. Therefore, student as well as adult stakeholders were seriously divided as to what reform of their school would mean. Participants worried about what would become of them as well as what kinds of changes reform might bring to the school setting that they had come to know and depend on.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MEANING OF AN EDUCATION

Introduction

This chapter takes a closer look at what constitutes a meaningful education in Hickory County. The debates about what kind of curriculum the school should provide, whose interests should be represented in school policies, and who was fit to lead this prominent institution all rest upon an understanding of the concepts of "education" and "schooling" that Hickory Countians bring with them when they convene at Central. What constitutes an educated person is related to how successful they have been at school, but it means much more too.

Education is about having knowledge and being able to use it effectively and appropriately in this county. This chapter first explores the critical differences between the two major ways of being educated, having "book learning" and "common sense." I note that there has long been a tension about the relative merits of these two kinds of knowledge and ways of knowing. Having and sharing knowledge is a powerful way of connecting with one's past and peers. Therefore, the messages that students receive through formal schooling, if they denigrate or dismiss the everyday kinds of knowledge that a student brings to school, might make that young person more likely to act as though she were "getting above her raising." Parents who have ethical concerns about the kinds of secular, modern, and individualistic values that their teens are learning at Central worry that their children will "lose the mountain" and forget where they came from.

A second question about what schooling means is the open-ended issue of whether participation in high school is only valuable if it leads to a gainful employment. The majority of Hickory Countians take a narrow view of schooling and assert that the main reason to complete high school is to have a better chance at the few jobs that exist in the region. Students who plan on leaving Hickory County for at least a while take a somewhat different view of what their Central credential is good for, but they too realize the limited power of a degree when local jobs are often allotted on the basis of family, connections, and special favors rather than on merit alone.

Book Learning and Common Sense

"A grain of common sense is worth more than a mountain of book knowledge if they don't have common sense!" declared Mrs., Norris, a central office staff person. Her critique of school learning reveals a deep-running current in popular thought in Hickory County, namely that there is a world of different between "education" and "schooling." While the former is essential for life, many people question the knowledge and morality of people who have been exposed to a great deal of book learning. Thus, in answering the question, "What should our schools teach?" educators at Central had to address head on the paradox that the more schooling their students receive they less they may be considered to be properly educated.

But the difference between being educated in school and educated through life experiences is much more than a matter of the specific content and source of instruction. Hickory Countians ascribe a moral dimension to formal education, one that often puts schooled people at odds with their less-schooled neighbors and kin. First, many families experience a conflict of values between the knowledge required for success in school and the kinds of abilities that enable a person to be one of the "home folks." Second, for those families with a strong set of Christian values based on Scripture, the secular teachings and the practice of critical inquiry at school may be at odds with those teachings presented as immutable, unquestionable truths at home and in church. Third, young people have to learn how to strike a balance between being better educated and yet not acting like they are better than their peers or elders. Hickory County people feel that a person who has had a lot of schooling is at greater risk of "getting above their raising" or even "losing the mountain." These phrases are used derisively to mean someone who has forgotten where they come from, feels that they are better than others, believes they know everything, and/or is no longer aligned with the common person and thus is a suspicious - even dangerous - person to be avoided.

Knowledge for Life and Knowledge for School

The dichotomy between "common sense," and "book learning," is fundamentally important in understanding the ambivalence that Hickory County parents, teachers, and students bring with them when they enter the classrooms and corridors of Central High. To many, the high school does not offer an education that includes skills, abilities, and ways of relating that are valued. But, many see no other viable option for schooling or question the value of what is available at any school. In response, many teens, supported by their parents, will exercise their option to withdraw at age sixteen. Amy described the difference, "Getting an education is you go to school to be taught the things that will help you in the future. Going to school means just going because you have to, and when you turn 16 you drop out." Even if they have not physically left, many of these Appalachian teens have unofficially withdrawn from the formal and informal curricula years earlier, refusing to or unable to adopt the manners, language forms, and definitions of success that the school system aims to inculcate.

Hickory Countians greatly esteem "common sense." This is defined as understanding that comes through concretely-grounded experiences of living in a particular place. It spans the breadth of knowledge about how to relate to peers and elders, how to live off the land, how to work together for mutual survival and fun, how to get what you need from a distant and dense government bureaucracy, how to fix your own car and dry your own shucky beans. Inherent in these abilities is the assumption that given the choice, the mountaineer would rather be self-sufficient and self-reliant. While school was not ruled out as a source of learning, other venues were seen as more reliable. Rebekkah wrote, "During your life you will learn very important things in your homes, church, and school such as responsibility, good attitude and honesty." Young people still need to internalize these values and the instrumental competencies that enabled their foreparents to maintain both the autonomy and local communalism that they so cherished.

These values arise from the experiences of carving out a niche in what was the western frontier of the United States of the late eighteenth century. "Book smarts are not enough," declared Jenny Strong, whose family has lived for generations along the Strong Branch of the Boone River, "you have to learn how to survive." The rugged Appalachian mountains provide the backdrop for a way of life that, in the recent past and still for many today, was centered on ensuring the very survival of your extended family. Life meant very hard work, self-sufficiency within a small kinship and/or neighborhood group, reliance on the grace of God, and strong family connections.

For both men and women living in these isolated areas, the ability to do multiple tasks well, from playing the mandolin or guitar to canning corn and fixing the pick-up truck, was highly valued. Mrs. Robbins, a teacher and long-time resident described the enduring importance of these general abilities, "All college does is specialize you in one area. I studied home ec, but to can beans I called my mother! I don't sell her short, she's got *a lot* of common knowledge!" Men particularly expressed their desire to be seen as competent in diverse, hands-on activities. Mr. Dobbs, a thirty-two year old father of two high schoolers, described what he saw as the marker of someone who really had ability:

> People'll say he's really smart with common sense. When you're talking to 'im you can see that he has that intuitive sense, can fix mechanical things, can just about *see* how it works. A college-educated person might be good with paper, math problems, computers but they couldn't do it themselves. Like they could tell you, but not do it. [Someone with common sense] couldn't *tell* you, but could *do* it.

He continued that coming up he had attended a one room school that, like most of his time, had very limited instructional materials. Through mixed-age groups and out-of-class experiences, they learned a great deal nonetheless; "when I went to school we didn't have calculators. We didn't have computers. Our technology was a '57 Chevy."

Hickory Countians expressed the desire for enough literacy to read what many take to be the only source of real authority, the Scriptures.[1] With this information they can set their own shared standards of conduct rather than relying on externally-imposed legal measures. A young mother told how she valued this ability to be in charge of her own affairs, "People in this area rely on the churches, the teachings of the Bible will show you that you're in the wrong and you can correct yourself." Especially for those older citizens over age 55, reading and numeracy skills were valued to the extent that it enabled a person to read the Bible and to occasionally ride or walk down to the county seat and keep track of the family's accounts.

In addition to these abilities and attitudes, common sense was the understanding that this way of life was fundamentally good. Mrs. Jenkins, a senior citizen and prolific gardener felt that among her most cherished abilities was the "education to enjoy life, to wonder at the simple things - change in seasons the flowers. . ." Others said that people needed to learn a healthy respect for the power of nature, especially the flash floods that swept through the narrow mountain hollows each spring. A professional who had returned to Hickory County after attending college in the city, added that he felt that a well-grounded, every day "education gives you enough to be satisfied, to enjoy life without wanting too much."

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[1] Unofficial sources of information are, nevertheless, prevalent among the somewhat scarce reading materials in most of the homes that I visited. In the main room. the centerpiece on the "coffee table" often consisted of a crochet white doily, a Bible, an ash tray and a wooden duck decoy or similar momento of a trip or hunting interest. Even in the most dilapidated, although tidy, mobile homes there were several shelves in the main room which were filled to overflowing with pictures of family members, shot glass collections, and books and, occasionally, hunting or sports magazines. Many of the mothers of high school students, whether 34 or 43 year old, enjoyed reading romance novels that contained, as they relayed, an alternate kind of life that they may not have desired but nonetheless found intriguing and instructive.

In compiling lists of what was considered essential common knowledge, respondents differed in the amount that they felt that a person should know. Younger and/or formally educated people (who had been to some form of post-secondary training) felt strongly that the basic level of knowledge needed for everyday life had increased. All four respondent groups on Faculty Survey II were most likely to "definitely agree" that "getting an education is more important today than it was 20 years ago" (Teachers X[mean]= 4.69, Involved parents X= 4.56, Adult GED students X=4.36, Freshmen X=4.60). A former teacher in the county said, "face it, we're in a technical world. If you're educated you can fill out a tax return, [have] some math skills, read instructions to put a toy together, [give] directions to your children. Leastwise a high school education is a 'have-to' nowadays."

Mr. Dobbs also concurred, adding although older people might disparage someone who was schooled with the retort, "I bet they ain't got no common sense" the ones to do this would likely be those "who can't write their names, who have little schooling." "Common sense is all they had, they didn't have the education that we have now. Times is really moving on," this thirty-two year old continued, "a fifth grader is doing work that I didn't do. There's just more knowledge to be teached to them today." And despite their reservations, many people concurred that such knowledge came through formal classes. Every single one of the adults in the GED classes surveyed answered that they "definitely agree" with the statement, "I hope that my children will have more education that I do."

Although also valued, there is considerably more ambivalence about the merit of book learning. This form of knowledge is normally gained through formal instruction away from home in formal, age-stratified classes. The teachers have been certified as experts in a particular field, not by neighborhood consensus, but rather by external experts who are also formally educated. Students learn about formalized relationships between people that are not based on demonstrated expertise, but on codified rules, written evaluations, numbers, and scores. In schools, students learn about formalized, polite, "proper" ways of relating and behaving. One of the most loathed of such rules was Central administrators' new insistence that boys take off their baseball hats when entering a classroom. These boys wore their hats so consistently in nearly every other setting, that when they did relinquish their hats (which certainly not all did) their hairstyles were permanently imprinted with the shape of the hat rim.

Facts are those skills, sets of information, and attitudes that are deemed valuable by the nameless authors of the school's textbooks. A person who has "book larnin'" is able to repeat these often abstract ideas. Because these ideas are seem to have originated from someplace else and apply to a supposedly generic lifestyle that may or may not correspond to that pursued by a particular Hickory Countian, they are seen as being devoid of any real content. While it may be interesting to know about the histories, philosophies, and cultural expressions of other areas, in general there is the sense that these belong to "them," to the world "out there," the places beyond the mountains.

Students expressed more interest than their parents in knowing about the "real world" "out there." Many teens sought such knowledge through books and school-time experiences. Marissa said:

> You can learn important things at home from your family. You can learn enough to get through life. But it is so much easier to get through life if you have an education. . . going through life is so much easier if you know a little bit about what is going on around you . . . So school is the best place to learn important things.

Like many of her peers, she wanted to know more about the things that she saw through the satellite dish and her television, especially MTV.

In contrast, a determined few of her teachers and community leaders prized the relative isolation that they were able to maintain for their children. Sitting around the teachers' table at lunch, Mrs. Richards remarked to me, "See these children sitting here? You just don't see that angry look on their face, that hate like you see on inner city kids. Our kids are still innocent." She may or may not have known just how many of the group that she gestured over to regularly smoked cigarettes and/or marijuana, had sexual intercourse, drank, drove recklessly, and knew a great deal about the inconsistencies and abuses of those around them. Whether she did not know or did not want to know remains a critical, if unanswered, matter.

Wisdom does not necessarily come through schooling. One way of distancing oneself from the charge of being an "educated fool" is through the use of moral tales. These are shared around the copy machine at Central, in the greeting card aisle in the old downtown drug store, and in the tantalizingly dark pool hall above the laundry-mat on Magnolia Street. Parables abound about the educated person who is so inept that he is a hazard to himself. As the foregoing pronoun indicates, nearly all of these have male protagonists. These tales are told both by those who have left high school as well as those who have completed college. Narrators regularly use these parables to criticize those who are acting "high and mighty." Nearly everyone I interviewed could relate a story about a "man with an education, " "a genius," or a "schooled fellow" who was so lacking in common sense that, for example, he "couldn't tie his shoes hisself." Another common criticism of the educated person, particularly in stories told by men, was that he would be unable "to find the engine if his car broke down." In another parable the schooled man was charged with having "to be led across the street." In one retelling of a similar parable among a group of men in which the speaker wanted to empathize just how pathetic the protagonist was, the man had to be lead across the street *by an old woman.*

A similar parable in which the educated man "couldn't find the road" reveals how important it is to have common knowledge that one gains from oral means. In Hickory County the majority of side roads do not have road signs and few of the unpaved roads that branch off the main lines are marked reliably. Further, roads are often referred to by colloquial names or neighborhood abbreviations that do not necessarily correspond with the official name on a map. Therefore the man's ability to read (street signs) probably would likely not only be useless, but it would actually be likely to lead him astray.

A further way that these ideas about the difference between being educated and being knowledgeable infuse conversations with shared meaning is through the use of disclaimers. Many see being the stereotype of an "educated" person as someone who is not open and willing to learn something valuable from "common people." Therefore, in informal social situations speakers will drop in disclaimers to forestall any charges of being too educated and thus, out of touch. They do not want to be seen as having forgotten the communities and peer groups that they came from. This seems to be particularly important for people who *are* well educated. Needing to be seen as still one of the gang and as thus having allegiances with the listeners, they preface their remarks with statements such as, "Now, I *am* educated, but I am still a good old boy. . ." Or, through their disclaimers they critique an excessive reliance on book knowledge or statistics to legitimize their opinion. They say as this man did, "now, I really haven't been to school much, but. . ." He continued, evoking the kinds of shared, daily experiences that would have led anyone with enough common knowledge to the same conclusion.

Similarly, in public settings those who have been elected to represent others via the school board, city council, or citizen's task force will often preface their remarks with a measure of humility. "Now, I'm not too smart, but *even I* can see our schools needs to be changed," a college- educated man said in such a public meeting, adopting the ungrammatical "needs" in a way uncharacteristic of his speech, but commonly used in the regional dialect. Such ironic disclaimers allows the speakers a way out if they are wrong. But, it is important to note, because their real level of education is known to virtually all listeners, this preface reminds all present that until proven wrong this properly and modestly offered opinion should indeed carry a great deal of weight.

The power of these disclaimers to reinforce the authority of the speaker stands in striking contrast to the result when similar statements are used by those who are *not* formally educated. Mr. Nelson, an unemployed father who had left Central as a "second year student" was called in to meet with Mr. Newmann about his son's chronic temper flare-ups. Throughout his responses to the principal's statements, he inserted comments such as, "Well, when I was in school. . ." and "I'm not that schooled, but I know not to . . . " Mr. Nelson, in a follow-up interview the next time he was called in, told me that he wanted to defer to the principal and show his respect for Mr. Newmann's greater knowledge about the high school today. But his comments also reinforced for both him and to Mr. Newmann this father's lack of a shared high school experience and lack of understanding of how to encourage his son to show the deportment he would need to become employable. Rather than bring the men closer together over their shared concern for the student, these disclaimers only served to reinforce the principal as the only one with the requisite knowledge or authority to definitely address the behavior problem.

Differences in status related to education can be important for those who would like to become more involved in school affairs. A closer look at the distribution of school credentials is in order. Hickory County's short and squat pyramidal structure of income levels is similar to that of educational attainment. Most people fall in the lowest ranges, with just a few exceeding the mean by a considerable, and significant degree. According to the 1990 Census, the average level of education in Hickory County was 8.3 years. That year, 53.4 percent of adults 25 and older had no high school diploma. A larger portion of males than females left without completing high school, 54.1 percent of men 25 and older compared to 52.8 percent of women had less than high school (Pritchard Committee for Academic Excellence, 1992). Two thirds, 65.9 percent, of school leavers had less than a ninth grade education. Twenty-seven point two percent did hold a high school diploma. Therefore, 80.6 of Hickory County adults had a high school education or less.

In contrast to the half who went to high school at most, 1.8 percent of adults 25 and older had an associate's degree and 4.0 percent had a bachelor's degree. Many Hickory Countians have had some college or technical training, but more leave higher education without completing any degree than actually persist to attain a higher degree. In 1990, 9.6 percent of adults had some college but no degree as compared to 5.8 percent of those with an A.S. or B.S./B.A. On the top of this structure were the 4.1 percent of adults, about 760 people, who had a graduate or professional degree. Most of these people are educators, engineers, business managers, lawyers, social service providers, nurses and doctors, and other medical specialists. A larger share of the male population (8.5 percent) had graduate or professional degrees than did women (7.6 percent).

The largest single employer of relatively highly educated people (the 4.1 percent with more than a B.A/B.S.) is the public school system; in 1994 the Hickory County Schools employed 733 people. In addition to the certified staff (teachers, administrators, librarians, counselors and special services professionals), the schools also employ bus drivers, cooks, janitors, secretarial staff, and more. Those who can obtain a job as a teacher are well-off indeed compared to the average person; the average classroom teacher's salary for the 1992-1993 year was $31,423. Compare this to the median household income for 1990 (which includes a mean of 2.72 persons) of $12,697. Although other individuals have found jobs with the railroad and mines, in law, business/sales, engineering, civil service, or other entrepreneurial occupations where they may earn several times a teacher's salary, these men (and, to a much lesser extent, women) are exceptions in Hickory County. The result was that relative to the average person in Hickory, even the most junior of teachers was significantly more schooled, had greater job security, and made more money.

Those adults with an eighth grade or even high school education concurred with Central teachers that as "outsiders" they found the high school environment to be intimidating. They found the halls chaotic and the main office bustling but with no one on hand to welcome them. Although college-educated parents reported feeling put down when they asked for information or clarification, less educated parents showed an even more pronounced deference to the school staff's supposed superior knowledge. Sitting atop the sturdy pyramid of cinder blocks that formed the entrance to their newly renovated and tar-papered home, Mrs. Jones and I discussed her daughter's habitual truancy. While she felt powerless to compel her daughter to attend, she held out hope that the teachers knew what to do. She drew on her own stereotypes of teachers as authoritative. She half asked, half reasserted for herself, "the teachers are the experts, they know what they're doing, right?"

Even parents who frequently came in to Central to perform volunteer services wondered whether they were truly respected and their services valued. Other parents who came in to check their children out of school for the afternoon also confided that did not feel able to speak as peers, feared being ridiculed or ignored because of their grammar, and hesitated when they did not know school terminology such as "sophomore." A former coal miner who came in to check on his daughter explained in an interview:

> People will say, 'I don't have an education,' or 'Y'all know more than me.' People without much education have more of a problem. They feel insecure. I think they put more stock in an education than what's really there. They don't feel they speak as well, but education won't change that, it's environment!

As this man pointed out, although these differences need not necessarily cause rifts between school personnel and residents of the county, in the minds of both parents and teachers, the difference between book knowledge and common sense reinforced their differences in status and authority. These parents were not asking to be part of formal decision-making on a school wide level, just to take part in their own children's futures. The extent to which these issues of knowledge and legitimacy influenced parental participation in site-based decision making and county-wide meetings will be discussed in the stories in Section Two.

Moral Conflicts with Secular Education

A second set of reasons that some parents and teens never fully supported the kind of schooling that Central High offered arose from perceived conflicts between the secular values in the school and education based on Biblical Scriptures. For these people, secular "education" was equated with "evil." As one man of about sixty years said, as he sat smoking his cigarette in the corner grocery and laundry-mat that I frequented, "the problem with the world today is that there's too much education in the world!" He continued sarcastically, decrying the seductive power of that sinful indulgence, "Young people's got to get out and get themselves education." Instead, he thought that, like in his day, they should be at work and in church, "doing an honest day's work" rather than sitting in class thinking that they already knew everything.

Parents who had a great deal of faith in their religious teachings felt that young people today did not know those things that they considered to be the most important. At a school-sponsored forum designed to bring together parents, teachers and community leaders, participants discussed the perception that there was increasing secularization of the public schools. One of those present was preacher, who along with other "concerned citizens" had founded the Community Trust, a Christian group with the aim of infusing fundamentalist Christian values, texts, and instruction into the public schools of Hickory County. He agreed with other parents that "the moral foundation should be with the parents but it also needs to be in the schools." He felt that the education provided in the public schools devalued those things that mattered most to him:

> Students need something they're getting less and less of - the information and world view of Scripture. The fact that there is a supreme authority, their lives have purpose, that they have the power and reason to accomplish something in life, and an afterlife that rewards even the struggle that you go through. They need heroes, need to know that there is God that is concerned, that someone cares about them when the teacher doesn't see me. The humanistic agenda that has pervaded our schools is drawing the life blood out of our people, destroying their self esteem and motivation. The humanistic agenda has taken off the moral fiber layer by layer. We need to strengthen the fiber of everybody, of the whole community. Students need to come to an understanding of their purpose in life - that is getting less and less in society in general.

He posited that a further consequence of this absence was that the schools no longer had a sense of common purpose. He blamed the fragmentation of Central's faculty on the absence of a moral imperative in their own preparation. He suggested an ongoing "Bible course or even the Bible as literature so that the Holy Spirit can use the grace that comes through that information. So they have a frame of reference to give drive to work together in a positive way, a positive frame of reference." He went on to invoke a nostalgic, lost past when there was "a common frame of reference" which set out hierarchies of authority and knowledge to which young people were to defer: "When we were in school we had respect for older people, for the importance of the different roles that exist, for proper male-female respect."

Other parents with strong religious convictions felt that participation in school led their children to challenge their elders' beliefs. Although Hickory County did not have a particularly strong conservative resistance to outcomes-based education (OBE), as in other, western parts of the state, this may be more an indication that OBE was barely beginning to be implemented in the county than their lack of organized objections. Those with sentiments against state specific learning goals saw, for example, KERA curriculum goals that asked students to critically assess "alternative lifestyles" or discuss matters of sexuality and health as being unacceptable. Not only should these subjects be taught in the home, they argued at Sunday evening church suppers, but teachers were encouraging students to question given concepts of "right" and "wrong." If gaining an education meant encouraging students to question their parents, not all were willing to send their children to participate in this institution.

They did not see their beliefs and ways of knowing, e.g. by faith or by Divine Word, valued at school. As Mrs. Raleigh, a mother of two students at Central added:

> If it's left out [of the high school curriculum] that says it is not important. If I don't see it at school I begin to question whether it's important or not, whether honesty is important, whether you cannot steal. And why? Because there is an ultimate authority.

Although the majority of parents in this focus group did not wish to seriously pursue adding explicitly Christian teaching to Central's curriculum, they wondered if there might be repercussions for not doing so. Mrs. Robbins, a parent, offered her belief that dire consequences would continue to be the direct result of having segregated religious education from school instruction. If the two were not brought together, she warned, other efforts to improve the school's curriculum were pointless. She stated, " When you take God out of something, He will not bless it. We have taken God out of the schools and He will not bless it. If He's not there nothing else will work."

"Getting Above your Raising"

The third dimension of the conflict over the curriculum at Central dealt with the potential conflict between being schooled and being a good person. On a written survey, I asked respondents to state how much they agreed with "the kind of person you are is more important than what diploma or degree you have." The modal response from both involved parents and the men and women in an adult education course for those working to get their GED was "definitely agree"(Involved parents X= 3.94, Adult GED students X=3.36). Central's faculty were less likely to agree, their modal response was "3" or "I agree some of the time" (Teachers X= 3.64) Freshmen were also more ambivalent (X= 3.49). Being a good person and being an educated person are seen as closely related and not mutually exclusive. However, many people feel a tension in trying to balance the two.

The conflict between those who are accomplished in book learning and those who posses common knowledge arises from Hickory Countians' concern that those who had succeeded in school would look down on who had not been successful. Women in Flo's beauty salon and men in Baker's barber shop and Cost Cutters discussed the link between being educated and "getting above your raising." Both those who felt that the school denigrated common sense in preference for "book learning" or "science," and for those who felt that school denigrated religious sources of understanding and ethics, feared that young people who had gained the relatively higher status "school knowledge" would look down upon their upbringing and elders. They did not want the well-educated to disdain the hard work that his or her relatives had put in to conquer the wilderness on the frontier. "My mother doesn't have a high school education," explained a teacher who was born and raised up on Disappointment Creek, "but if'n I looked down on her or was in any way ashamed of where my parents live. . .," she said, her tone indicating that she'd be in trouble, "those are my parents and the Bible says to respect 'em. For example, if I tried to avoid saying where I went to school or college that's just wrong. I am what I am."

These conceptions about what it means to be educated often put a schooled person at odds with the less well-educated. Another frequent motif in Hickory County residents' stories about what it means to be educated was the belief that someone who is well-educated is suspicious. The concept that someone with expertise, particularly one who *acts* like an expert, is not to be trusted recurs as a particularly important theme. Through the generations, Hickory Countians have seen former classmates and neighbors make the trek back up into some of the more remote areas of the county only when they needed votes or support. Too often, after exchanging liquor, old stories, and promises for assistance, they never saw the "politician" or "college man" again until the next election. Because those who ran for the elected offices of county judge executive, sheriff, jailer, and even county magistrate ("squire") were frequently among the relatively well-educated elite of the community, the connection grew between being able to use "fancy words," "talk fast," and being a "swindler." County dwellers saw that these visitors were more willing to take than to create relations of reciprocity. They believed that these men, in their fancy suits and automobiles, sought out "common folk" for their vote but were not aligned with "common" interests after the elections.

A story that the elder Mr. Creasy, a long-time resident, told me summarizes the many layers of skepticism with which Hickory Countians view such a presumably well-educated person. Sitting and sipping coffee at one of the several sandwich shops that, thanks to its regulars, had survived the explosion of fast food restaurants on the highway, we talked about how he learned about educated men when he was a boy coming up in Higgen's Hollow. Mr. Creasy told about sitting on his front porch with his mother when a fancy car came driving up their dirt road. As his mother could see the car a long way off, she gathered her beans together in her apron and shoed her son indoors with the shout, "Git inside! It's a politician coming!" Young Creasy went inside, for he had heard how the well-educated, fast-talking politicians had swindled his parents before. Who else could it be in such a vehicle? No one else on their road even had a car. But to his and his mother's surprise, the driver was his father. He had invested his money in a brand new Ford, and was proudly bringing it home.

In the following section, I further explore how Hickory Countians, teen and adult, more closely differentiated between the value of different kinds of school learning. Keeping in mind the concerns expressed in this section, I present specific kinds of book knowledge that they feel is worth gaining. What makes a Central diploma worth the effort of obtaining? Participants in the multiple discourses on reforming the school talked about the things that one needs to know in order to create a respectable life for oneself and one's family. Students perceived these things to be different, depending on whether they planned to live in Hickory County or to face the largely unknown, and leave.

The Value of A Diploma

A second paradigm that informs how most Hickory County parents and youth view schooling is that it is valuable if it leads to gainful employment. Since residents believe that students can gain important knowledge and relationship skills at home, school staff need to show that attending and completing high school produces added value that the student could not have otherwise gained. Teachers are challenged to prove that their curriculum enhances the students' chances of securing local employment and/or increases their ability to go beyond the mountains and compete for a position elsewhere.

Many teens will stay in school only until they are able to find work; in the class of 1995 almost a dozen students quit during their senior year, many telling their friends that they would find jobs. Amy Jo, a senior who wanted to be a veterinarian, talked with me about this tendency:

> People quit and I don't know why, not when they get that far! Some people quit just a few months before the end. Probably they got a job in the family lumber mill or something. You know, people here's kin to everyone else and probably it was owned by a father or brother in law and sister and they know they can work there, so why do you need an education? People mostly take manual jobs - you know, the kind that we go to college to get away from.

For the most part, the boys went to these small family lumber mills, auto parts stores, and joined road crews that were carving a new highway through the mountains. The girls went to chain retail stores or restaurants. But most never found paid part time or full time employment . Brandy remarked in an essay on the value of a high school diploma, "Having a job is the most important thing right now for teenagers. But for the teenagers that drop out of school doesn't get so lucky with jobs. So the point I'm making is to stay in school."

Reasons to Complete High School

Central High sophomores, in a writing exercise and discussions designed to elicit ideas about the relative importance of completing high school, reflected greatly varying degrees of support for staying in school. "It never was a question of whether or not you were even going to go to high school, it just was assumed," was the response of about half the students, several of whom were doing well in school and making plans for higher education. Although many of the students who reported such support had parents who had finished high school and even college, this was not exclusively the case. Ruby, who was barely scraping by with passing grades, aimed just to complete high school, but spoke of her goal with a determination that far exceeded her grades. Sitting outside on a muggy fall day, enjoying a smoking break during Saturday detention, she and I talked about how her mother was pushing her to stay in the same school that she had left. "'Ruby,' my mother says," she explained, her voice becoming softer as she leaned over to knock the ashes off her cigarette, "'If I die promise me that you will graduate.' She really wants me to graduate."

However, a significant portion of the sophomores did not have such unequivocal support. More than half stated that for them staying in high school was a choice. For these Central students, no one, whether parents, peers, and teachers assumed that they would make it to graduation. Students and teachers are aware that each year teens show up at school on their sixteenth birthday, the age when they can legally quit school, and with their parents' consent and presence, formally sign out of school. "That is their Happy Birthday present" reported a frustrated teacher who had seen the scenario all too often. Many of the sophomores are close to or are older than this critical age. Melissa described the dilemma that was an open topic of discussion among her classmates, "We come to think that quitting at the age of sixteen solves all our problems. One of the biggest decisions you will make in life is graduating from high school." The relative merits of staying in school when slightly more than half of their classmates leave was not always apparent. Crystal confided that she often felt alone in trying to decide, "your have to make your own choices - At this point in your life you have no help so all you got is yourself to make your own choices."

In a similar exercise conducted with freshmen, nearly every one of the 100 students randomly selected personally knew at least one person who had dropped out. Almost half of those with older siblings had at least one who had left Central without finishing. Most of the survey takers felt that the drop outs had made the wrong choice. Stating that she intended to be a good example, Erin wrote, "If you quit, someone close to you will to." However, although she checked off that she hoped to completed high school, she also checked that she did not know if she would actually do so.

Students are often at a loss to see how the kinds of book learning that they are asked to do in school relates to getting a job. Their views of literacy and numeracy are clearly influenced by the kinds of work that they see the adults around them do. Blue collar workers in the retail and service establishments divide things into discrete categories, fill in forms, and follow through with mundane, repetitive tasks. Few students are privileged enough to see into the work lives of those professionals who manipulate abstract concepts or peruse written materials for patterns and legal precedents. Thus students see that what one needs in order to do the most common forms of adult work is primarily straightforward decoding and writing simple reports. Extraneous tasks that do not fit this instrumental conception are seen as getting in the way of real learning. As much as they complain about worksheets and multiple-choice tests, students complained even more when asked to answer open response questions on the new KIRIS assessments. Others felt that they were not really being taught correctly when asked to do something that went beyond the kinds of seatwork that most had grown used to doing. Jake drew on this concept of education as providing applied skills when he commented:

> With Honors English, why do we have to read books all the time? I thought it was English like nouns, verbs, pronouns, conjun'tion, and etc. -- but reading books??!? The teachers expect you to read books you don't even like. To me, I can't read a book I'm not interested in!

Another way that doubts about the curriculum influence student's perceptions is the belief that they would not be able to complete the work. Many beginning students who were unsure whether or not they would be able to complete high school expressed the belief that they were afraid that the high school curriculum was too hard. Sitting in the central office one day, I was called over to intervene with a student who was in tears, pleading to use the phone to try and reach her neighbor. Sitting together in a private space in the Youth Service Center where we could talk about what had precipitated her anguish, Mandy confided that she was about to receive an "F" on a social studies assignment. She had worked hard on the project but forgotten it at home, and as a result, would be given an incomplete. Like one in five other Hickory County families, Mandy's family did not have a phone or a car. She did not know how she was going to reach anyone who could help. Further, she was certain that if she received an "F" on this assignment she would fail the course. And, she, confessed, that would be the sign that she had been waiting for that freshman courses were indeed too tough. She might as well drop out now, she believed, and save herself from inevitable grief later on. Reflecting back on the few months that she had been there, she was surprised that for the most part she really did like high school. Thus, Mandy was even more ashamed and angered that it was turning out to be like she had been told. No one in her home had finished high school, and no one could help her with her homework; they all believed that although it would be nice to finish, it was nearly out of reach.

This sense that the curriculum was a roadblock and that there was no one there to help, at home or at school, was a significant obstacle. However, the very challenge of overcoming this hurdle was in itself a motivating factor for some students. "Most of the people in my family did not graduate from high school. That is one reason why I want to graduate. I want my family to be very proud of me and the decisions I make," wrote Nicki. Her classmate, Cletus, wrote, "Why we should go is for our parent, family, and mostly to our selves. If you don't prove it to them at least prove it to your self." This sense of taking on a personal challenge inspired many of the students who I met in the English classes as well as those whom I interviewed. Like many of her classmates, Lissa stated that she intended to beat the odds:

> To me an education is very, very important., If I have one goal in my life it is to graduate high school I just feel that our future depends on what decision we make now. Education is a key to success. Ever one has to go to school there are just some people who don't care. So my decision is to finish high school get an education and prove to yourself that you can do it.

Many students also expressed the concern that even as new freshmen, they had to convince their teachers that they intended to stay in school. In classes students regularly have to cope with such comments as, "Your father couldn't do equations either," or "It's a wonder they passed you out of eighth grade." After a prolonged absence from class, a student was greeted with, "Are you still here? I thought you would have dropped out by now !?!"

Students legitimized the effort of getting through high school with the belief, as Jason wrote, that, "It is hard to find a decent job without a High School diploma now a days." Evidence that this was true abounded. Michael added:

> My dad did not finish high school I know from exsperience without a high school education you will never work a job anywhere for more than m.n.w. [minimum wage]. And its hard to find a job without a high school diploma unless you want to pump gas somewhere or bag some groceries. I know I will get my diploma because I don't want to be like my dad.

Added Chasity, "By graduating from high school you are more likely to get a job. It might not be the most relaxing lifestyle, but it's the right thing to do." Agreed Crystal, "You need a high school diploma to get a job, a college diploma to get a job worth keeping."

Most of the parents whom I interviewed, whether they graduated from high school or not, wanted their children to complete high school. Often, the feeling was even more intense for those who had left school. Several recalled that when they went to high school it was considered a luxury, one that perhaps the family could not afford. Mr. Dobbs, a man in his mid-thirties, talked about his last day of high school:

> I loved it when I came here. [Fifteen years ago] we only came to town once a month. High school was great - it was like the country boy goes to the city, it was the ideal [idea] of going. But then Dad wrecked the coal truck and he couldn't drive no more. I don't know how he made it over to Central. They called for me and I went out to the truck. Dad said, 'You've got to go work for the family.' I quit that day of the accident. The work was hard - you had to do anything you could find. I drove truck, cut logs, hauled coal, laid explosives for the mines, worked where I could. I've been lucky. Other drop outs weren't so lucky - I could always get a job. And now I'm disabled [heart condition]. I want my sons to go to college so they'll not have to work as hard as I had to and be sick at an early age.

Students saw many examples of the connection between leaving school and having a hard life and difficulty in securing regular employment. Tracy Lee, who could name several people along her road who no longer went to either school or work, added, "I plan to graduate and get me a good job. Because I want to make something of myself and I do not want to have to sit around at home with nothing to do because I know I will have something to do day in and day out." Mike agreed, "I honestly can not see dropping out, I would be bored to dath. I know school can get annoying from time to time, but it's better than staying home everyday doing nothing." The sense that people who left school disappeared and did not do anything was summed up by Hannah, a senior. She and I were going through the list of students from her class who had left, trying to identify what had happened to each one. "They," she said, pointing to the next two names on the list, "are some of the Nothing People." Asked what she meant, she explained "they don't do nothing, they don't go no where, they just sit on the porch and look at the world. They're nothing, there's nothing for them."

The stark reality of a 38 percent real unemployment rate and underemployment of a significant proportion of the workforce was not lost on students. Sarah wrote from experience, "Non-working people must live off our government through means of welfare and food stamps. If you plan on living a low income lifestyle you will struggle to make a living." Melissa wrote, "On one hand if you do not go through with it you may end up on public support and never have anything and become in duet [debt]. But on the other hand if you go through with it you could go to college and become a professional at something. Then you could have a job that possible make alot of money."

Dan stated that staying in school could be a pivotal decision:

> I know people who had extremely bright futures, but failed in life because they quit school. I definitely do not want to turn into one of those people with a dead end job and absolutely no life whatsoever. . . . graduating high school may possibly be the turning point of my life.

Jo-etta concurred, "Graduating from high school can put you on your way to college and get you out of the slump that sometimes results from not finishing school." Mark also wrote, "Everyone should have the desire to make something of themselves, but without an education it will be very difficult to do so." Students talked about gaining self-respect from themselves and from others for their decision to stay. They felt that proving that they could make it was a sign of their intelligence. Conversely, to them, quitting showed just proved one thing. As Cletus, ever candid in class, wrote, "it is very important to go to school and graduate instead of dropping out and being stupid the rest of your life."

Despite the questionable financial returns to education, students exhibited a striking faith that school could offer them a meaningful education nonetheless. The sense of personal accomplishment, friendships, skills, self-discovery, and self-respect were all elements that older students cited as having been important parts of their education. Melanie wrote, "If you plan on going anywhere in life you need to graduate high school. When I say go somewhere in life I don't mean out of state, I just mean as a person." However, many of her classmates valued their diploma differently depending on whether they were going to stay in or leave Hickory County.

Staying in Hickory County

For those who had lived most or all of their lives in Hickory, the mountains embodied many things. Not the least of these is security. Mrs. Rogers, a retired elementary school teacher, reflected:

> The dirt, the earth, the land means security. This is where my parents lived, where my grandmother lived, where my grandfather lived. And it will still be mine. My ancestors [she lists them] are all buried above us on the hilltop in Rogers Cemetery. This is "us." This is where my people are. It grieves me to see the land sold. Property means stability. Look at Thailand - they never know what the government is so they carry their wealth in diamonds and gold on their backs. We have it in our land.

In Hickory County the concepts of "family," "home" and "land" are inextricably entwined. People live in communities and along river branches that bear the names of their kin, they go to schools named after local figures, they refer to "my mountain" and "our hollow." Brandy wrote, "The mountains make me feel like I'm at home because I'm warm and secure. " And Lisa created the analogy, "My hollow is my family. Everyone that lives up my hollow is related to me in some way." For these two girls as for most of their schoolmates, the choice of whether or not to leave was entwined in with many strands of both family and friendship.

Students at Central knew that many Hickory Countians had left for work in the northern industrial cities, especially Cincinnati and Detroit. Older men told stories of going north to labor in the cabbage and potato fields of Wisconsin and work in the canneries and steel mills of Michigan. Some ventured as far away as California. Although it had always been a part of male life, this exodus had picked up sharply in the 1970s when whole families relocated. Most of them hoped that the move would be temporary. Many came "home" on weekends whenever possible, even if it meant a long drive through the night to reach their destination by early Saturday morning. The number of students who transferred out of and back in to Central during the course of the year as their parents moved to follow job prospects show that this migration still continues, albeit at a lesser rate.

Teens also saw many people who returned, either unable to make a living or having made enough money in their careers to establish small businesses of their own or to retire "back home." Mrs. Rogers continued, explaining the importance of knowing that you could always come back:

> Earth is valuable to me, home and roots are important to me. It's not a building, but a place you crawl to when it seems like everyone else is down on you. This is

> a place where people move away, but this is the place people come back to. I don't know about New York. If I was from New York and [moved away and] I lost my job, I don't know if I'd go back to New York. But here, I could go up and down the streets of Hickory and say, 'Can I use your phone?' 'Why come right on in!' If you need somebody they'd be there. We're all still here - that's security.

A teacher also reported this sense that Hickory County provided a vital safety net for the rest of the industrial and post-industrial United States, "you've got people who can't make it anywhere else, but they can come back here and grow a garden, live with Mammy and Daddy, make a go of it. They can make it on almost nothing." Local people believed that one could come home and survive.

But teens did not simply see Hickory County as a place of last resort. Some wished to keep the strong family and friendship ties that they had established, as well as maintain a rural way of life. Involved parents as a group were the most likely to strongly agree with the statement, "I would rather stay in this county, even if it means less money or a job that I don't like as much" (X=3.53). But on the whole, freshmen and teachers were the least likely to agree; the modal response for each group was "I do not agree at all!" (Teachers X= 2.88, Freshmen X=2.37). At that stage in their young and restless life, freshmen were also the least likely to agree with the statement, "I prefer that my children live in this county (or close by) when they grow up" (Teachers X= 3.09, Involved parents X= 3.44, Adult GED students X=3.21, Freshmen X=2.90).

An interesting finding that arose from students' responses is that they saw the value of a diploma differently depending on where one planned on trying to find work. Students were divided as to the relative importance of a high school diploma, and considered it differently depending on whether or not they wanted to live close to home. Mary wrote:

> It's imporant to have a high school diploma anywhere you live specially if it is a small town. It will make it even harder to find a job because of all the other people who is looking for a job, and the population in the small town and if it is a large city or town it will still be hard because some stores or businesses can't or want hire without a high school diploma.

Rhonda added that having a diploma might be one of the few ways that she could compete in a very tight local job market dominated by certain families and social networks. "It's time that everyone is treated equally, a high school education is one way to be treated as equal as the next person." Surprisingly, freshmen were the least likely of the four groups surveyed to agree with that statement, "Having a good education can help you overcome having the wrong family name or being from the wrong place" (Teachers X= 3.85, Involved parents X= 4.29, Adult GED students X=3.36, Freshmen

X=3.00). Some of the sophomore writers did feel that an education was, however one of the few ways that they could even try to better their position in life. It seemed that finishing school was important for those who did not have connections or resources. Stacey, who aspired to be a hairdresser, wrote:

> Some people, who have plenty of money to waste, don't care if they graduate or not. Why should they care? they don't need a job, they already have all the money they need. As for others who aren't so lucky, they work as hard as they can to make good grades in high school and graduate so they can go find a good job and make something of themselves.

A diploma might help one to enter the competition, but students were certainly unsure of how much it would help when it came time for a specific employer to make a decision.

However, many students did not feel that having a diploma was the most important factor in landing a local job. Common sense, connections, and courage were more important. Of these three, connections were deemed the most critical. Misty compared the ways that things worked in Hickory County with the common perception of "outside:"

> If a person was going to stay close to home they would not have to worry about high school as much as someone who was going to move away. The reason for this is because a person who was going to stay near home would know most of the people and wouldn't have to worry as much about trying so hard to get a job.

Hanging out in the halls of Central between classes, Bobby Ann and LaVonda joked to me that coming up they had often heard, "In Kentucky your family tree is your family ladder." Although they did not think that the relationship was absolute, they believed that as far as Hickory County jobs were concerned there was a lot of truth in that saying.

Freshmen were divided as to how much one's chances were determined by more than effort in school. Most freshmen "agreed some of the time" with "If you want to get a job here you have to have the right political connections." Freshmen and teachers were almost equally likely to feel that this statement was only occasionally correct (Teachers X= 2.98, Freshmen X=2.96) However, the young adults (most were in their early thirties) who had come back to school for their GEDs were the most pessimistic of all groups and were most likely to circle "definitely agree," their mean response was 3.93. GED students, most of whom had had various experiences trying to find work in the county, were also the most likely to agree with the statement, "Its harder to get a job if you have the "wrong" family name or come from the wrong place" (X=3.86). Freshmen and teachers were the most optimistic (Teachers X= 2.91, Involved parents X= 3.18, Freshmen X=3.14) The 14 to 16 year old freshmen fell in the middle when it came to, "In order to get the best jobs you have to have the right name, be from the right place, or have the right connections" (Teachers X= 2.84, Involved parents X= 3.44, Adult GED students X=4.29, Freshmen X=3.31). However, when asked about their own personal preferences, ironically, students were the most likely of all groups to agree strongly that, "It is an important thing to have a personal connection of some kind before you hire a person." Their modal response was "agree some of the time," whereas the mode for all of the other groups was "I do not agree at all!" The means were teachers X= 2.19, Involved parents X= 1.72, Adult GED students X=2.14, Freshmen X=2.84.

Leaving Hickory County

Fundamental to many young peoples' beliefs that they could, even should, seek their fortunes elsewhere is the shared maxim that the world is different beyond the borders of the county. In their metaphor-writing exercise, teens expressed how the mountains created real boundaries that divided them from others and created barriers to the free flow of people. "The mountains are like walls," wrote Kerri, explaining, "this means they are every were you turn or go." Dillan composed, "The mountains are like closed, locked doors. They keep you in and keep everyone else out." The writing team of Mike and Danny wrote, "Mountains are big fences that seperate us from the rest of the world. The mountains surround our region and block out other regions. Since there are mountains we can't see but only so far." An entrepreneur who had lived in several nearby counties before settling in Hickory explained that these mountains contributed to local perceptions of difference:

> [All these counties] are really the same place, all from the same people. But with growing up, with basketball and boundaries, you come to see people as different. You find tags to tag people with, to say they're more different. We see people in [county to the north] as being different, snobbish, they see us as being primitive. We say people in [county to the east] are more mountain and so they're behind us. Everybody perceives the counties as different. In the old days maybe there were real political differences or rivalries with different Congressional districts dividing off districts.[2] These divisions last. Maybe its because there's not much contact, so people stay divided. Maybe you might have a relative in the next county, but otherwise people don't like to leave their place. You hear negative things about other people. You grow up and just believe there are differences. I don't know why it's important to people, it's just what you hear all growin' up.

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[2] Most of the Appalachian counties in Kentucky are now gathered together within the redrawn boundaries of the Fifth Congressional District.

The sentiment that a different realm lies beyond the hills was continually reinforced by comments made by teachers, staff and parents. Talking about the need for other faculty and staff to take an active interest in future graduates, a staff member who was one of the favorite among students said, "These kids need someone to care about 'em, sincerely care about 'em. 'Cause they need somebody to prepare for to get them ready to go *out there*." Statements made about teens' expected futures illustrate assumptions about their future being somewhere else, or at least in a different reality from what they face now. Parents and teachers repeatedly made comments such as:

> They have to get ready *for the world.*
>
> We need to prepare them to step out into the *real world* and live.
>
> We could bring back the seniors to talk with kids and say, 'Listen, it's different *out there.*'

The frequency with which students heard these comments were exceeded only by their own exchanges about what the rest of the world might be like. Guessing that anything could be better than Disappointment Creek where she lived, Jo-etta wrote, "leving the mountains is like going to a party. Because the mountains are really boring and thay are not a thing to do in the woods." Depression and despair about the conditions of local life did not only plague youth. Mr. Collins, a preacher, confided, "Tucked down between these mountains is security. Whether that's protection from the windstorm or etc. It's comfort and strength. But," he continued, reflecting on his own desperation to travel to other places, "in these same mountains you'd die of depression. They choke you to death. Sometimes you just have to get out so you can see over the top of these things."

Sometimes more serious desires inspired students to seek escape from what they often experienced as a constraining, even smothering existence. Melissa expressed this need in a poignant comparison:

> The mountains around here are like my parents mouths. This means that they both keep going and going and don't know when to stop. This makes me think of the time I was in the mountains walking and I thought we were never going to get out of there that is like when my parents start on my [me] and I think there never going to stop.

In the writing exercises the young women were more apt than their male counterparts to express the desire to leave, but were also more likely to append commentary about the hurdles that they would have to overcome in order to gain their freedom. Sarah wrote about her concerns:

> The mountains around here are like boyfriends they are always in the way. This makes me feel like how are guys always bugging you and not wanting you to go no where without them. Mountains are always in the way there just there.

Despite the obstacles in their path, many of those I interviewed persisted in telling me that they were "going to make it." Some even had a plan. Alan expressed this determination in his metaphor, "The mountains are like walls you can't cross them but someday Im going to."

Many adults could share these students' desire to leave. Several parents who were discussing preparations for a school function agreed, stating together, "I guess when we were that age we all wanted to leave too." But, they also countered that they only fleetingly regretted their decision to live and raise their children in Hickory County. Not all adults feel so pleased with their decision, however. Many feel real ambivalence about their decision to stay. One of the contributing factors in the dissatisfaction that some residents expressed was the belief that at one point or another they had actually made a choice and as a result they themselves were responsible for their position.

For young people, the choice that they face is further complicated by the idea that those who want "to be somebody" will leave, at least for a while. Of the sample of freshmen, 39 percent "definitely agreed" or "agreed most of the time" that "If you want to have a good job you have to leave this county." Many had internalized the concept of success that included achievements in another place. Thirty-four percent "definitely agreed" or "agreed most of the time" that "If a young person has ambition he or she should leave this county." Interestingly, if not surprisingly, the freshmen were the most likely to agree with this statement and the involved parents the least likely (Teachers X[mean]= 2.71, Involved parents X= 1.88, Adult GED students X=2.71, Freshmen X=3.19).

Students receive explicit messages that encourage them to leave. Some of the most powerful of these are given at Central High. Consider the following sermon delivered suddenly at the end of a lesson on geography. Using the wooden pointer to show students the way to the northern Midwestern states, Mr. Wilkins exhorted his students:

> Best advice I can give you when you get out, is *you get out* of *here*. There's no industry and nobody coming in. The only hope for the future is tourism, tourism or land fills. Our area is historical area, but people won't come just to look at Pampers, bed springs, junk all over! How many of you have a creek in your back

> yard? The junk is up high when the water's high and when the River flows. And why is this a problem? The elected officials don't do nothin'! *You're* not going to clean it up. And so, it's their responsibility. But that will *never* happen with politics the way it is around here. You've got to clean it up or go where it's already clean!

The students sat silent, dumbfounded by the force of their teacher's delivery. As the bell rang and students gathered their belongings, Mr. Wilkins stood in the corner looking out the window.

Students evaluated the value of a diploma differently if they planned to leave than if they planned on staying. Kevin concurred that "Finding a job somewhere else is hard and requires a diploma from high school." Students felt that this formal document meant more outside of Hickory County because the employer would not have prior knowledge about you and your family. Misty continued in her essay:

> On the other hand a person who was going to move away would have to work even harder because the people would not know them and would only look at grades and achievements during their high school years. So therefore people who planned to move away would be more determined to do better in high school than people who wasn't.

Other student pointed to a diploma as the ticket to furthering your education outside of the county. Rod felt that graduating from high school was a prerequisite for setting in motion a cycle that could enable one to afford to leave and pursue an education:

> Most people who move away do so to go to college or to get a job. In order to go to college, you must first graduate from high school. Also, a high school education would help you find a job if you moved away from here. In school you learn greater job skills. These job skills help a person earn money, therefore enabling them to move away.

But the uncertainty of external job markets was a concern for many. Even with a diploma as well as an education, the future was not guaranteed. Becca wrote:

> For someone who wants to move away from here, it is really important to graduate and go to college. This is because so many other places and people are more advanced in education than we are here. But going to college for some is a waste. Many go to college and get an education for a job or career and can not get hired for the educational job. These people have to settle for less.

Nevertheless, these students wanted the chance to at least try out the world beyond the mountains.

However, her classmate Robbie warned, it is important to have a "good diploma." A gifted and articulate student with designs on landing a good summer job and, later, gaining admission to a well-respected college, Robbie acknowledged that his chances were undercut by the fact that he attended Central. "The problem is - academics is not taken seriously enough, who is responsible?" he asked. "It reflects on the whole school, Believe it or not, when trying to get a job, you could get turned down for another guy simply because of the high school you came from." For him, as well as other student in the class discussions, perhaps having no diploma and being able to say you left for better options (whether they actually materialized or not) was more advantageous than holding a diploma from a suspect institution. "It's really terrible when you have to be ashamed of what school you went to," charged Mr. Alexander, an angry parent. One of his daughters transferred from Central to another public high school in a neighboring county. He continued, "My son has [very good grades] but when people look at his transcript it has little value. It reflects on our community that when they see Hickory Central they think little of it."

Limited Returns to Investments in Schooling

Convincing teenagers in Hickory County to remain in school is a difficult task that is only exacerbated by the bleak employment outlook. "Kids don't see that effort pays off" bemoaned a parent. Concurred a teacher on the Faculty Survey I, "Students need to see a light at the end of the tunnel." In a meeting of parent representatives who served on the site-based council, the PTA, and the curriculum committee, participants acknowledged that Central faced an uphill battle. Mrs. Robbins declared in frustration:

> The school is trying to get them ready for a job or college. Why? The labor force and jobs aren't there - we're fighting a losing battle. If you live here and have been here all your life and you have a job you're one of the lucky ones.

They realized that for many of the students, the claim that education would lead to a job, especially a good local job, rang hollow. Nevertheless, they felt that they had little else to cling to but hope that changing the schools could catalyze other changes.

Hickory Countians manage to maintain a tenacious hold on the ideal that education is the key to their future. Rather than seeing the statistics as evidence that larger forces were at work, they interpreted these to mean that if only they had more, better, or a different education, the job market would pick up. Parents and community leaders explained again and again that they were trapped in a downward spiral. The cycle that they explained went roughly as follows: low quality education did not produce the kind of workers that industries wanted, the lack of local industries undercut students' desire to study, those capable workers with technical, innovative or entrepreneurial skills went elsewhere, neither these natives nor others were willing to return and found new industries because they did not want to send their children to the local schools, little push by those with the power to hire or create jobs left only those with little leverage to work for better quality education, the inertia of low levels of education continued to produce workers who were less than desirable to industries, and so on. Many residents had faith that poor education was the driving force behind this downturn; therefore, it would also be the way to break the cycle. When surveyed, there was strong across the board support for the statement, "Better schools will help bring jobs to this area" (Teachers X= 4.32, Involved parents X= 4.44, Adult GED students X=3.86, Freshmen X=4.07).

In the meanwhile, a large portion of students, both academic achievers and those who were barely passing, were reluctant to put much faith in their diploma or their Central education as the route to good-paying work. They questioned their teachers as to why they should study a particular subject; they questioned them as to why they should study at all. In Hickory County there are not enough minimum wage jobs for all adults, and students were convinced that they needed connections and savvy to obtain these. Further, many students felt that it was completely beyond their reach to try to compete for very few professional (e.g. teaching) and technical positions there were. Thus students questioned the probable return on their investment of time and energy. Would staying in high school even be worth it? Mr. Jacobsen, a railroad worker and former miner who took an active concern in the local schools, felt that he would be hard pressed to convince many young Hickory Countians that the answer was yes. He summed up that he had to admit that, "the value of education falls considerable if there are no jobs."

SECTION TWO: THREE STORIES OF REFORM

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THREE STORIES OF REFORM

"Stories are like roads, twisting, turning, and unfolding amazing things.
Stories that are usually told around here are long and you can end up
the opposite of where you thought it would.
Usually, you find out amazing things."

-Diane, a sophomore

Introduction

This section contains three stories. Reform happens one problem at a time, therefore each focuses on how stakeholders grappled with the complex set of issues surrounding a critical problem that they targeted for reform. Central High School is the stage upon which each these dramas played out, but the discourse about reform, the private deals, and the implications of these changes extended far past the school house door. What happened at Central was big news. Proposed changes made the front page of the local paper; they made the first item of business on front porch neighborhood briefings. People knew that things were happening at Central, even if it was very unclear what those changes might be. In this small and closely-connected rural mountain county, reform was a community affair.

This chapter is a weaving together of tales told in and out of school, of "tales told on" people and the myths and ways of conceptualizing the world that gave these tales meaning. I outline the main ways in which people understood what the problems were and their constructions of who and/or what was causing these problems. I then describe how participants built relations of reciprocity with other stakeholders and found compelling reasons to come together and take joint stake in reform. These elements each contribute to a better understanding of the fundamentally important underlying cultural themes that describe how this distinctive set of Appalachians approached educational reform.

These are not stories in the sense of a simple account that progresses from the identification of a problem to discussion of it to a final resolution. Rather, like the roads in Diane's metaphor above, these stories trace repeated switch-backs and unexpected turns. They fold back upon themselves like well-kneaded dough. When KERA entered the storyline, it created further twists in what was already an ongoing discourse about reform.

More than a few times, it seemed that Hickory Countians were not making any progress. Thus this narrative rightly foregrounds the process of reform, using particular reforms as the means to illustrate critical incidents rather than as ends in themselves. I have opted not to try to impose an artificial linear progression on a decidedly convoluted process. The third story (Chapter Six) is the most sequential of the three, as there was one clear goal from the outset, namely, screening a candidate for superintendent of the county schools. However, even this story takes into account the multiple and often conflicting realms in which the story concurrently played out.

The three stories in this section can be seen as concentric circles, each one encompassing an increasingly larger set of stakeholders. I begin at the center with the formal mission of this public school, that is, providing the children of Hickory County with an education. Building on the description of the meaning of education presented in Chapter Three, the first story begins with the problem of why and how a critical mass of Central's faculty members resolved to provide a meaningful education for their students.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FIRST STORY: CHALLENGING AN UNCHALLENGING CURRICULUM

"We need more edjicatioin in our classes."
Randy, a sophomore

The Problem

"Just The Way It Is Here"

Underachievement had long plagued Central High. This state of affairs began long before the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990. And ironically, as several parents and teachers believed, this chronic problem may even have been exacerbated by the very KERA mandates that sought to produce higher achievement.

From my very first weeks at Central, teachers were quick to cite statistics about their students that "proved" how little they or their students could do. They said things like: "Less than half of these kids will graduate." "They can't read." "What we get in is pitiful, there's not much we can do with them." "He'll stay in basic math for three years." "She won't do anything." "They get so far behind before anybody notices. You lose them already in the fifth or sixth grade and they just hang out until they can drop out as freshmen or sixteen." "They just come to town to get a hot meal and then lay out of class." Underachievement, chronic truancy, and ultimately, dropping out, were taken to be immutable facts of life at Central. But they were not problems, that was "just the way it is here."

Explanations for this state of affairs followed. Teachers almost inevitably blamed the victims, those children who experienced little success in school. On the first survey of teachers and staff that I conducted in the fall, the Faculty Survey I, teachers stated that the problem was that, "Students see no great need for an education." In the survey the greatest areas of concern for faculty and staff encompassed problematic student attitudes "towards learning and school." "Student apathy toward learning" and "a lack of student motivation" were frequently cited, as was a "don't care attitude." Respondents linked "the lack of personal worth by my students and their lack of motivation to complete their academic studies," even adding that some students, "have such a low self-esteem. . . that they can't stay focused on the subject."

Parents also did not escape condemnation by the teachers as the leading causes of their students' failure: "Parents do not see the values of education." Most common was the blanket assessment, "They don't care." Welfare and lack of success in their own high schooling were two of the most frequent underlying reasons given. In fact, on Faculty Survey II when asked to state how much they agreed with the causal statement, "Welfare causes a poor attitude about the importance of getting an education," the modal teacher response was "I definitely agree!" Parents were seen as being inadequate and /or incapable of becoming involved as in, "We have so many disinterested and uneducated parents" or "Many parents are 'on the draw' and do not wish to help children or can't." Sometimes, even more sinister motives were ascribed to the average Hickory County parent, as in this assertion that, "Parents say, 'Don't do good on that test or we'll lose our [welfare, SSI] check.'" Asked what if anything is hindering greater parental involvement at Central, the majority of teachers summed simply, "Parent apathy is hindering parent participation."

KERA's Expectations for Success

In contrast to the teachers' gloomy assessments stands the optimistic slogan of Kentucky's systemic reform: "All children can learn at high levels." This phrase is repeatedly invoked in professional development sessions and literature written to encourage support for the Reform Act. However, on a survey of faculty that I conducted, only 19.7 percent of the faculty and staff answered "definitely agree" with the statement, "All children can achieve at high levels" (X=3.49). Interestingly, Central High faculty and staff were less skeptical when it came to agreeing with the statement, "Most young people can finish high school." Sixty-seven point two percent answered that they "definitely agree," (X= 4.52). No one strongly disagreed and only two people only agreed a little.

Progress toward the high standards of achievement fundamental to the Reform Act is measured through KERA's assessment/accountability mechanism, the Kentucky Instructional Results Information System (KIRIS). The testing program is made up of four parts: the writing intensive, open response written test; a performance event that requires students to work in groups to produce final written results; writing and math portfolios that demonstrate students' best work and which are, ideally, compiled over four years; and a non-cognitive index which, at the high school level, is a measure of the school's accomplishments in the areas of attendance, retention, drop out rates, and "successful transition to adult life." In the writing section students are tested on reading, writing, social studies, science, mathematics, arts and humanities, and practical living/vocational studies. KIRIS results are computed at the individual level only for the open-response writing sections and the math and writing portfolios. The performance events and non-cognitive data are compiled as aggregate school and district level scores Students are scored as "novice," "apprentice," proficient" (the baseline that all students are ultimately to attain) and "distinguished."

The KIRIS assessments are given to students in the fourth, eighth, and twelfth grade levels. However, after the initial round of tests, the open-response tests and the performance events were moved to the eleventh grade. The premise for this change was that students who were identified as still being only "novice" or "apprentice," the two lowest rungs in the four-tier ranking system, could receive help before they left school. The 1994-1995 academic year was the overlap phase in which both Central's juniors and seniors were tested. At the other grade levels students take "practice tests" to prepare them for, as the kids said, "the real thing."

KERA states that "schools shall expect a high level of achievement of all students." Therefore, nearly every student enrolled in that school as of the first day of the testing window in mid February is required to be tested. The few exemptions are granted for limited English-speaking students, foreign exchange students, and student with verifiable health-related problems. An issue more relevant to Central's student body is that students for whom the school is accountable and who do not test are automatically counted as "novice." Thus Central's 15 percent absentee rate, including the testing days despite vigorous efforts to reach absent students, automatically created a significant number "novices."

Based on those students who did take the exams, Central High School did poorly on the KIRIS assessments. However, to put the scores in context, no district did very well in the baseline years. The average score for all Kentucky schools was 36.4 in 1992, and had risen to 44.8 by 1994. The long term goal is to have every school in Kentucky score 100, at which point all students would score "proficient."

Each school is given an "accountability index" that sets the minimum level of improvement that the state expects to see. This index sets the target for improvement at closing 10 percent of the gap between the initial score from the 1991-1992 year ("baseline index") and the long-term goal of 100. Schools have two years in which to meet or exceed the accountability index. Accountability Cycle I included the 1992-1993 and 1993-1994 school years. The year of the study, 1994-1995, was the midpoint in the second accountability cycle. One of the challenges of this form of setting goals is that districts such as Hickory County that score low initially have a higher increment of improvement to meet than those districts that score well initially.

Based on their scores, districts fall into one of four categories. Those that meet or exceed their accountability index by one or more points were eligible for rewards. In the Accountability Cycle I, 486 of Kentucky's 1,247 schools were in this category. Schools that do not meet the threshold were required to develop and file school improvement plans a.k.a. a "Transformation Plan;" this is where Central High and 339 other schools ranked. Those that drop below their baseline (55 schools) must complete a school improvement plan. They received the assistance of a state-selected Kentucky Distinguished Educator for one year in residence to help them improve. Schools that fell five or more points below their baselines were decreed to be "in crisis." Because each districts' accountability index is different, a degree of improvement that might put one district into the "rewards" category might barely qualify a lower-scoring district from avoiding being labeled "in crisis." Conversely, a district that scored very well initially might fall below its high baseline and be declared "in crisis" while still scoring significantly above a district with a low initial score that had earned rewards.

Districts are highly motivated to avoid falling into the lowest category. Originally, KERA gave the state the right to intervene in these districts while students were given the option of moving to "more successful" schools. The state would offer "assistance" to these districts in the form of requiring the Transformation Plan and providing improvement grants. The most controversial, and most widely discussed, however, was the state's exercise of its new right to remove district leadership and bring in external advisors who placed the district under their guardianship. And, as everyone at Central knew, several of their eastern Kentucky neighbors had indeed been "taken over." The legal arm of the Kentucky legislature established in KERA to monitor progress and enforce accountability, the Office of Educational Accountability (OEA), has shown itself to be willing to step in and remove school boards, superintendents, and other educational administrators. However, the outsiders sent in to run the districts have come under bitter personal attack, literally as well as figuratively. Responding to great public outcry and resistance in those districts and from their supporters, the 1994 legislature delayed further such full interventions. However, Hickory Countians held out that "the State" was simply regrouping its legal forces in an attempt to intervene even more decisively in the southeastern, Appalachian part of the state.

The Test Scores as Problems

The goal of the KIRIS assessments was to indicate the areas that needed improvement and, through the score, motivate local schools to meet or exceed the goal of all students scoring proficient or better. The scores were meant to assess the progress of individual districts. Media accounts repeatedly stressed that parents should focus on how well a school was doing relative to its baseline rather than compare between districts. However, in the very same articles the newspapers listed the top ten and bottom ten schools. Hickory Countians also tallied up the scores, and saw that despite some improvement, they were still among the lowest in the state. To Hickory County teens and their parents and teachers, Central's low KIRIS scores just indicated how far behind Central stood.

Most parents and many teachers did not really understand all of the components of the scores, they just saw the overall numbers and gave these a life of their own. The scores themselves, rather than the low levels of achievement that they represented, became the problem. The gap between the goal of 100 and their score seemed like an insurmountable obstacle. The persistent sense that they had too much to accomplish exacerbated the local sense that low levels of achievement were endemic in the Hickory County schools. In a parent-teacher forum held a few months after the KIRIS results were released, participants lamented the growing sense that they would never be able to overcome the legacy of low performance. These parents blamed the *scores* for causing this increasing problem:

> Mrs. Nichols: Our kids are really beat down.
>
> Mr. Keller: We've been told that 'you're at the bottom of the heap.' Our scores are on the bottom and Kentucky's on the bottom. You're at a disadvantage [relative to graduates from other schools] and don't feel that you're going to make it anyway.
>
> Mrs. Thompson: All you hear is bad---
>
> Mr. James: ---- It's real unfortunate- the state blaring [the low scores]. That's been a real negative - it highlights what's been going on long, but they don't see what's still good, what's also there.

> Mrs. Nichols: Our kids feel like that they're the stupidest kids in the state. I think that these tests and the publicity these tests results have received have done more to hurt us than anything.
>
> Mr. James: They don't try, they think they can't.
>
> Mr. Keller: Yeah, you feel you can't make it.

A member of a past school board felt that no news would be better than such continually bad news. He chastised the regional and state media:

> You can't make the schools look so bad, it boomerangs on you. They should stop trying to convince the people that the schools 's so bad - that's sawing the limb off that you're sitting on. People'll just flee to private schools.

And, as is the case for most Hickory Countians, if there is no private option within traveling distance,[1] he continued, they would be likely to take their kids out of high school altogether.

This sense that they had little to lose led to several jokes around Central that if they were going to be on the bottom, they "might as well go for worst!" Central had consistently ranked among the lowest-scoring districts on state and national (NAEP) achievement tests even before KERA. Although this was disconcerting to many, there was a certain glorious notoriety in being on the bottom. In lunch time discussions over Hardee's sandwiches that had been fetched for us by students who had been sent off campus for just that purpose, staff and I talked about a Central student who had scored the worst in his class on a pre-KERA standardized achievement test. Munching the hamburgers - a delightful respite from the cafeteria's "mystery meat"- the staff explained to me that in that year Central had scored the worst in the state, and Kentucky had scored the lowest in the country. So, in effect, my lunch mates announced, Central had produced "the stupidest kid in the entire United States!" "At least we can be outstanding at something," Mrs. Reilly consoled the group. The lunch crowd only half laughed. While this joke lasted to provide a source of amusement several times over the course of the year, that young man's fame lasted only a short while. After his testing debut, he dropped out. And no one was quite sure where he was.

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[1] Less than 3 percent of Hickory County youth attend private schools. Most of these are private Catholic or Baptist schools.

Opening up the Dialogue

Pushing against this rising tide of sarcastic despair were several trends and events that, taken together, were able to not only contain, but rechannel the energies of some of those who lamented Central's status. The organizational force behind these changes was the newly-appointed leadership at Central. This included the recently arrived Mr. Newmann, a former teacher from a nearby county who came to Central in his first principalship, Mr. Harris, who had long been the guiding force for the school in his capacity as assistant principal, and newly-appointed Mrs. Walker, a former Central teacher and the first woman to be promoted to a principalship at Central.

They consciously created opportunities for faculty members to meet and discuss school policies and practices. Mr. Newmann was instrumental in reinstituting the practice of regular faculty meetings and activating the nearly defunct site-based decision-making council (SBC). He divided almost the entire faculty into SBC committees that worked on such key issues as curriculum. With their support, I also created and administered a series of surveys that were used as planning documents that helped faculty members identify, prioritize, and discuss their shared concerns. Although not all teachers gladly or even actually served their appointments or regularly attended faculty meetings, a critical mass of faculty members took a considerably more active role in formalized, school affairs than had previously been the case. The domain of what constituted a public, faculty concern had been enlarged. At the same time, parent groups such as the PTA that had largely been peripheral if not actually dormant, joined the parent members of the SBC to create a parallel discussion about school policies and priorities. A critical window of opportunity had been opened. It was now up to a faculty not used to being actively involved in decision-making to make the most of the options available to them.

One of the first outcomes of these overlapping discourses is the realization that they needed to better understand several of the basic paradigms that shaped how they and other Hickory Countians thought about schooling and education. Like Mr. Briggs, a science teacher, many felt that they needed to start at the most fundamental level. He wrote on the Faculty Survey I that they need "to have a more united faculty, with better understanding of what education is all about."

Raising Expectations and Taking Responsibility for Reform

Those who charged that Central's curriculum was largely unchallenging had a lot to accomplish. They were beginning to make use of the newly opened public spaces in which discourse and action about the curriculum could take place. But in order to make the best use of these forums, they had to address two related problems. First, they needed to create the consensus that they indeed did have a problem. Too many students slipped, even walked, through the cracks and learned very little while at Central. Nearly half of all the students were slotted into - and stayed in - remedial tracks. Those who persisted for four years had a great range of literacy and numeracy skills; while some performed among the best in the state, others were barely competent.

Second, they, as faculty and staff of Central High, needed to accept the responsibility to address their problematic offerings. This would require a significant shift in attitude. For, as one of the popular boys' sports slogan T-shirts taught, "You can't steal second with your foot on first." If they were to move beyond a pattern of blaming the students and parents for student achievement they would have to acknowledge their role in student failure. If they were to see the KIRIS tests as diagnostic aids rather than as problems in and of themselves, those who were in a position to educate teens at Central would have to accept some of the responsibility for student learning. They would have to make the change from simply being spectators to becoming players. Better yet, team players.

External Pressures to Change

The threat of a state investigation and potentially a full take-over of the district was an important catalyst for addressing the curriculum.. Although the state had not formally announced an impending take over, investigators had repeatedly come in and examined district documents and policies (or found that no written policies existed). The Office of Educational Accountability's investigation was not an idle threat - teachers, janitors and bus drivers were on top of the news of what was happening nearby. The specter of (what central students and staff perceived as) impending doom cast a long shadow over the year I was in Hickory County. Discussions at lunch were often of nothing else.

One of the side effects of this threat of external intervention was that stakeholders redoubled their efforts to do something about the kind of education that their students were and were not receiving. The two-year accountability cycle imposed by the KIRIS system lent an urgency to teachers' desires to adjust the curriculum so that they could improve their score enough to meet the index and thereby avoid a take-over. Even if they weren't taken over, many teachers found the ongoing investigation, especially as it dragged out month after month, to be rather annoying. If they tinkered with their courses, they said, perhaps the state would take this as a token of good will and leave.

But those who had sought a catalyst for enhanced standards and effort from the faculty argued that they now had a supportive and well-informed administration at Central and they should finally respond to some of the initiatives and mandates in KERA and implement them on more than a superficial level. At the public forum held in conjunction with the selection of a new superintendent (the man who had held the post for over 20 years resigned at the same time that the state investigation was becoming more focused), a teacher warned that Hickory County administrators had better become more serious about implementing KERA initiatives. He felt that leaders should:

> support KERA even if [you do] not fully agree with it) because A) because it is the law and we are being held accountable and B) because you might like it once you give it a fair chance - it might really work.

On the Faculty Survey I, a teacher concurred:

> More teachers need to aply KERA within the classroom rather than continually denying that it is an important part of our schools or refusing to change because they disagree with KERA. We have much at stake and even if we disagree with some components of KERA, it is a necessity and reality that we must deal with.

According to the timeline established in the Act, 1994-1995 was the benchmark year when, officially, KERA was to have been completely phased in across all districts in the Commonwealth. And, it did not look like it was going away any time soon.

Internal Justifications to Change

But external motivation from a state-imposed assessment/accountability system was not, in itself, enough to inspire people in Hickory County to become stakeholders. After all, they did not have a stake in KERA's success. In fact, many teachers and central administrators in the county who resented the intrusion on their autonomy and/or disagreed with specific provisions in the Act hoped that if it failed, it would go away that much faster.

If reforms were to be more than just superficial compliance without real change, local educators had to have a stake in the success of the curriculum reforms. More important that an official declaration that the status quo was no longer acceptable were frank acknowledgment by the teachers themselves that something was wrong, that they, indeed, did have a problem on their hands.

One of the kinds of problems identified by the corps of teachers who quickly got involved in change was that it was immoral to ignore the students. Mrs. Clearsy, a teacher who joined the curriculum committee, said:

> Anytime you have a child's life in your hands and you don't give him an education, and 50 percent's not getting one - that's a doggone big problem! I just hope that we're not to the point of accepting it, not seeing that there's a need for change.

She put her responsibilities to the children in terms of a prevalent Hickory County approach to organizing the world, that is, she saw her charges and colleagues as being like her extended family. This sense of being "related" was the critical part of her sense of collective responsibility. S he explained:

> Some members of the faculty will go that extra mile. If the water is on you turn it off and don't say 'That's not my job.' You pick up a broken pop bottle 'cause, hey, a child could get cut. But some people never see the glass. You protect your family, you look after you family. So with those things that are a problem -- you just don't ignore it, or look over it!

However, faculty members gathered in the curriculum committee noted, there were times when they did not act like a family.

As the committee moved to nearly bi-weekly meetings after school, comments like the following became more common. In their private sessions, with only eight or nine people present at most, teachers and staff ventured to say that they might be culpable in their students' underachievement. Comments included:

> We have to face up to the fact that students are not prepared for the future.
>
> We allow students to float through high school without ever being challenged. They exit unprepared for life.
>
> We allow parents not to be involved in students' education.

Although comment such as these were much rarer in the large group faculty meetings where upwards of 40 or 50 staff were present, they had nonetheless been thrown out into the ring.

Another reason that faculty members stated that the low levels of achievement and school completion were a problem was that it put their children, their communities, and hence their very futures in jeopardy. Some teachers, like Mrs. Reilly, felt that the major problem was that the curriculum prepared ambitious students to go away to college and encouraged them not to return. Concerned about the resulting brain drain, she argued, "We need a solid education. We need to bring our lifestyle out of the dark ages so that we can keep our wage earners at home." Others saw the problem more as those youth who did stay felt little connection to their home towns and expressed little faith that they could make a difference. Mrs. Jenkins, a member of the staff, said that the main issue was a "problem of apathy, kids have no interest Kids aren't trying to improve themselves or the community."

Mr. Jenkins, a community leader who managed his own small company, continued in the vein of local rationale for addressing the curriculum. If Central did not offer an education that students found appealing and well-suited to their desires to have a job in the region, he was concerned that they would drop out. Further, he noted that Hickory County could really use more entrepreneurs. It was unlikely that many national industries would come in to the county, indeed, the new "industrial park" had only managed to secure a handful of business in the several years it had been open. He wanted to see Central prepare kids to do something about the economic situation right there in the area:

> Some districts are poor, and they're just going to be poor unless you build a school system to prepare people to make a living in life - not all go to college, but technical schools. Otherwise, we won't get the most out of what we have. You have to find a way to use the resources here to provide a living. The coal is passing away but we have excellent timber and there's more potential for tourism. . . We need education not just to teach people to read and write, it's education about your whole environment. What does it take to just live here in town or develop the country side too?. . . People need to be entrepreneurs. People could make a fortune here.

He went on to describe a pilot operation that he visited where they are venting the geothermal heat and carbon monoxide out of abandoned mine shafts to run hydroponic nurseries for tomatoes, lettuce, and cucumbers.

In curriculum committee meetings, teachers realized that they already had numerous innovative and challenging programs that merged local vocations with student aspirations and regionally-relevant curriculum applications. They had some starting points already available at Central that should be strengthened. It was important for them to realize that they were not starting from scratch. Central did offer courses of "book knowledge" that were challenging, engaging, and related to regional needs. The agriculture classes grew new varieties of tobacco seedlings from seeds donated by the Agricultural Extension and then sold them to local farmers. The keyboarding classes were using the new computers (from a KERA technology fund) to learn business applications. The English classes were encouraging students to enter essay contests that were earning students regional recognition. Stakeholders felt that each of these initiatives were responding to a particular need in the county, and providing students with the opportunity to experience success. They wanted to continue to provide such meaningful educational experiences that were presented with local contexts and applications. And they wanted to do it themselves.

Challenging the Stereotype of Failure

One of the recurring setbacks in this effort was their own low expectations for success. Sitting in an Indian restaurant in a neighboring county, enjoying dishes that were never served in Central's cafeteria, I spoke with a community leader whose many work-related travels often took him out of the region and required that he work effectively with non-Appalachians. We talked at length about the role that being stereotyped as "Appalachian" played in peoples' sense of self-efficacy. He said:

> Maybe we have a chip on our shoulder. We don't speak so fluently. We feel insecure. I guess I resent being stereotyped by the media. When people say they're from the mountains of Kentucky, you're just waiting for the axe to fall.

Maybe," he added, looking around, "people in India feel the same way. People just see clothes hanging [and think poorly of them]. But maybe it's more of a stigma in our minds than in others'." Back at Central a critical mass of stakeholders who participated in dialogues about enhancing expectations were adamant that they could not afford to let others define them. Angered by some of her non-participating colleagues' complacency, Miss Gray argued, "We've used the excuse of "Appalachia" too long. We've been labeled and we may have - some people - accepted that label." In shaping the dialogue, Mrs. Collins recalled the great exodus of white Hickory Countians to the north, especially to Detroit, to work in the steel mills and factories after World War II:

> People in Detroit made jokes about us, how we talked, and people acted the part. We've brought a lot on our selves. And that's created problems and it bothers me. I love this area and I hate for the world to look down on us and say this is how it is.

Those who worked in and around Central had many reasons that they liked living in their county - friends, quiet, natural beauty, the general trustworthiness of neighbors, a low crime rate, etc. Many parents hoped that their children would also be able to stay. But in order for that to happen, they had to gain something from their years at Central. Mr. Dalton, a teacher who also had a son at Central said that he wanted "people in the community to say, ' I want my child to go to Central High, it's a good school.' "

One of the first steps in addressing both the issue of self-defeatism and stereotyping by outsiders was to agree that higher academic standards were appropriate. Those teachers in the curriculum committee, as well as the couple of parents who eventually joined the team, saw the KIRIS scores as a black eye. They felt that whatever the numbers said, their kids were basically capable, perhaps, even brilliant. Students concurred. Both those who easily did very well, as well as those who really struggled to make "B"s, felt that the school had been stereotyped by others, as well as by their own teachers, as "just a bunch of students who don't care." Students' regular counter assertion to this claim was that there are many intelligent students "who want to be somebody and get an education." When it came time to defend their accomplishments to outsiders and to themselves, teachers were quick to point out that Central had produced several scientists, athletes, public officials, and doctors of note.

"People in Hickory County are as smart as people elsewhere." was one of the questions on the Faculty Survey I. The modal response for all four groups surveyed was "I definitely agree!" "Involved parents," those who frequently attended the few academic and governance functions that there were, were the most likely to select the most affirmative response and they had the most consensus about this statement (X=4.83, SD=0.37). The more participants in the expanding dialogue provoked by the low KIRIS scores talked to one another, they more they came to believe that the scores were not the end of the story. They were not the problem, but rather symptoms of other issues. All of these developments made those who had refused to be pulled under by the stigma of the low KIRIS scores somewhat more buoyant.

Challenging the Accuracy of the Test Scores

If the KIRIS scores did not accurately reflect the full potential of students, what then did they represent? Students and teachers looked around them and came up with a few probable answers. First, many of the teachers at Central, particularly those outside the core KIRIS subjects of English and math felt that the KIRIS tests just were one more burden. Those non-core subject teachers who did become involved in dialogues about reform (including at a minimum coming to faculty meetings) were less likely to believe that their students needed all the kinds of critical thinking and writing that KIRIS open- response items were based upon. Mr. Leonard, a member of the large dissenting faction, did not like the KIRIS tests because he felt that they were irrelevant to what his students would be doing in the future. He grounded his dislike of the exams:

> I feel there are too many changes that need to be discussed. KERA, KELP [Kentucky Education Learner Profiles], and Hickory County's own outcomes are impossible to meet. This is too demanding on anyone. Are all children going to make a living writing? This is the main emphasis of KERA.

As a result, his students were quick to note that he did not encourage them to write much. In fact, when they requested that he give them a written assignment that they would include in their writing portfolio (a portion of the items had to come from classes other than English) he refused. The students were left to figure out on their own where they were going to get the required items.

Another element in the low scores was teacher disdain for the external accountability mechanism in the first place. When Hickory County leaders initially signed on to the Council for Better Education suit they did so primarily in order to increase resources. In like manner, when Central teachers initially voted to have a site-based council, they agreed in name only, in order to be eligible for monies that rested upon "buying in." They had neither asked for - nor wanted - such long strings attached to the money that they had received. Although they hoped that the money for teacher raises and capital improvement stayed, they were willing to do what it took to get the rest of the package to go. If this meant undermining the school's test scores, that what some were willing to do.

Another contributing factor to the low scores was that students as well as teachers felt that poor performance was what was expected of them. Although some students took offense at outsiders applying the word "hillbilly," or "hick," they freely used it among themselves as a way of achieving notoriety by way of being "bad." To others who had reclaimed the label, "hick" was a hard-earned badge of pride that meant somebody really cool, fun, outrageous, independent, and incorrigible. But many students, especially those who hoped for high individual marks on KIRIS that might land them a scholarship, did not appreciate their peers trying to live up to the worst aspects of stereotype. Joe-Etta criticized that the KIRIS scores do not reveal what the students are actually capable of, but rather, are all too often a reflection of their disdain for the tests themselves and their desire to act the part of the "dumb hillbilly:"

> I feel that they people that are making all of the trouble should be severely punished for the embarrassment they have drawn to our school. They are making this school look disgusting to the State Department when they cone in to see how we have progressed. We are getting made fun of because of the test scores we have received last year. Fourth graders are doing better than most of us. 'Why,' you may ask. Because the people that are just going through and marking answers are lowering the scores of the students that try their best. That is why. It isn't fair for everyone to suffer because of what some do. I think that the students that score low on the tests should have to take special classes that would improve their scores when we take the test again.

Although some students resented their peers' shenanigans and teachers' complacency, others, like Mike and Danny who could barely read, confided that it offered them a cover for not doing well. But in the end, they stated with frustration and long-buried resentment, the tests didn't really make them feel better, the tests were only one more reminder that Central and the elementary schools that they had gone to had not attended to their most basic needs.

In response to concerns that they perform better on the next round of KIRIS tests, teachers on the curriculum committee, bolstered by the administration and funded by the budget decisions of the SBC, promoted pro-KIRIS sentiments. They ordered and replicated posters about how to answer open -ended questions on the tests and asked as many teachers as possible - and not just in English rooms - to display them. Using the new enlarger at the district office, they also blew up descriptions of the scientific method to poster size and displayed these also.

As far as faculty development went, those who has taken a stake in taking up the challenge of improving their scores knew they had much to do. Teachers and staff knew little about what actually was required in open- response items, heterogeneous grouping, performance events, and other approaches that KERA encouraged. Teachers were certain that in the past, the district administration had hoarded information about KERA and not distributed it to the schools. Since some of the outgoing and current leaders had not wanted KERA to succeed, they were not about to arm their teachers with the means to make it look good. So, teachers on the professional development committee asked their peers what *their* priorities were for workshops. Since with SBCs they now had the discretion to choose topics and trainers instead of getting everything approved through the district, a slight majority voted for more training about KERA and KIRIS.

However, one glitch in this process marred an otherwise exciting change in attitude. One of the leaders of the professional development committee was a new faculty member who was from the next county. In her previous position she had been immersed in KERA and brought along a healthy dose of enthusiasm for the various curriculum initiatives along with knowledge about how to make these work. She was eager to lead the professional development committee and learn even more. Those committee members who did not want to be thrust in the limelight emanating from such a prominent, pro-KERA stance were glad to let her lead. However, some faculty members who resented being told how to change their teaching were even more resistant. She was at a disadvantage for those who wanted to ignore, even ridicule her actions, largely because she was 1) new, 2) an outsider, 3) female, and 4) young. It took veteran and insider teachers to take a stand for change before some of their more reluctant colleagues were willing to even look like they were in agreement with KERA. But, being together was critical. "Increasing student understanding and awareness of how to answer open-response questions is the only way these scores can rise -- provided that all teachers are doing their jobs!" asserted a sympathetic but silent colleague, Mr. Richards.

Along with trying to get all faculty on board, teachers had to be willing to see that all students should be included in their plans for reform. Teachers on the curriculum committee hoped that by providing a more fun, challenging, engaging, and applied course of studies, they could also improve the non-cognitive part of the school's total KIRIS score. Mr. Jones recognized the interrelated nature of these outcomes:

> We need an overall positive change in our students' attitudes about school Many see it as a prison and a negative requirement of life. If we make school more attractive (it takes everyone) our attendance will improve as well.

His colleague, Miss Crawford, added:

> I would like to see students interested in attending school, have the desire to attend. They are going to have to be provided programs of interest. If a child can't read or is a poor reader, school must be very boring to him.

In the smaller SBC and committee meetings, a wider range of teachers felt comfortable speaking out about their hopes than they had previously been willing to venture to do in the large faculty meetings. Again, and again, those who had become stakeholders in the success of new curriculum thrusts pointed to the importance of getting everyone on board. Miss Gray wanted "a school where the majority of the students are excited about learning - and where all teachers are willing to work toward this goal also."

High Expectations for All

New students were told many tales about Central long before they crossed the threshold of the front doors. Angi recalled that freshmen come here to Central thinking:

> Great I've passed the eight grade I was so serious about grade school but, now I've made it here now I don't have to do anything. Most of the Freshmen think being in High School means that you can just run around. Which most teachers will let them.

Students expected to come to Central and not be challenged. Because half of their classmates eventually gave up and left, some of those who did stay felt that teachers owed them an easy time, or they would leave too. Students recognized that the number of staff was based on ADA; if they boycotted the education that they were (not) receiving, their teachers would eventually suffer. The result in some classrooms was a pact of mediocrity in which little was demanded of either student or teacher. Ryan, one of several students who had been sent to Hickory County to live with his relatives instead of the crime-ridden northern industrial city where his parents lived, said of Central after his first few weeks, "The classes are easy. You don't learn nothin', but it's easy." Randy, one of his classmates, wrote in an essay on the greatest problems at Central that he found this lack of content to be disturbing. Like so many of his friends who had thought that high school would be fun, he found the dullness stultifying. Randy summed up his greatest wish in language that strikes at the heart of the problem; "we need more edjicatioin in our classes."

In the weekly faculty meetings and in the nearly biweekly curriculum committee meetings, teachers talked about what they wanted to accomplish. Building on a phrase that had been popularized in the recent movie Field of Dreams, teachers stated hopefully, "if we offer it, they will come." Colleagues talked at length about how they were perhaps partly at fault for their students' lack of motivation to come. Miss Clearsy said, "Students need reasons to want to come to school. Classes need to be fun - not dreaded." Mr. Lewis added, "the "lack of motivation and respect from students. . . may be part of our attendance problem - some students don't know why they're here."

On the Faculty Survey I a colleague added, "Teachers can help this by making classes more interesting and encouraging students to succeed rather than fail." We need to "establish a positive learning involvement in which the students have a purpose and goal upon completion of high school." Mr. Reilly echoed those sentiments:

> Teachers and administration attitudes must believe that all students have worth and can achieve at higher levels. Eliminate options that allow students to perform at mediocre levels.

As one survey respondent noted, "higher teacher moral[e] builds desire and leadership qualities that instill interest and desire into our students." The environment must also be welcoming. It would simply help if "we could not treat them like idiots. The worse we treat them, the worse they will act." And, as another person wrote, we need "rules made sensibly and intelligently and teachers who love and care about their children." Likewise, in a hallway conversation sparked by a particularly contentious faculty meeting, Mr. Dalton said that he and his fellows need to start assuming that students were capable. They needed to communicate expectations for success instead of sending messages that facilitated failure. He said, "We need to address our drop out rate. The background of going to school must be stronger - we have to start early just assuming they will all graduate."

The key word in these statement was "all." While the symbol of a family might have helped some teachers think of their students as their collective responsibility, many children realized that they were not seen as legitimate members of the family. At the public forum convened to gather public input into process of the screening of applicants for the superintendency, many gathered stated that all children should be treated equally. Mrs. Thomas, a parent, wanted to see greater commitment to the KERA statement, "All children can learn at high levels." "Educators," she said, should realize that "achievement does not have anything to do with what holler they came out of or how many illiterate ancestors there are on their family tree!"

Part of responding to the need of their diverse clientele was acknowledging the importance of the local sentiment that a diploma was valuable primarily if it led to a job. Most teachers spoke of successful students exclusively as those who had gone to college. However as participants put more emphasis on developing and organizing vocationally-oriented programs that were not merely "dumping grounds," other teachers more came to talk explicitly about vocational options as being viable and worthwhile pursuits. When one of Central's star pupils did poorly on the KIRIS section dealing with general science (e.g. weather, mechanics, electricity) the matter was clinched - all freshmen were to have a basic exposure to the formerly disdained "applied science."

Teachers wanted to see a greater variety of quality programs that they would actually enjoy teaching. Mr. Lewis stated that whatever their interests, "I would like to see students being motivated and challenged to learn. This could possibly be done by offering a wider variety of classes." Another member of the curriculum committee supported him:

> Programs need to meet the diverse needs of our students. Not all students are college-bound. Some students see no need for an education in the core curriculum. A specialized training program in 'hands on' needs to be implemented. The vocational school could be a key concept. Have an end product produced each year with all the different vocational programs involved in the making of it.

Several teachers, based mostly out of the English and social studies departments, began to talk about what a locally-relevant curriculum might look like. They talked about Foxfire models of using their Appalachian heritage as both the subject and medium for inspiring student achievements. A year after I completed my work there, this idea carried through and culminated in an Appalachian Days celebration.

The Faculty as Stakeholders

As teachers talked more openly and critically about the roles that they had played in facilitating, even encouraging student failure, they began to talk about "the problem" as "our problem." Committee members began to share the working assumption that it was not only appropriate, but necessary, for Central High teachers to take a leading role in challenging their students.

One of the common analogies that they drew on was that Central was "like the Alamo." By this they meant that Central was a refuge in the wilderness, a stronghold of resisters who refused to be overcome by the larger numbers of the opposition. In this idealized view, the curriculum committee stakeholders teachers were fighting a noble fight, the few against the masses. This sense of being called or of being on a mission helped focus their energies. But, paradoxically, it also narrowed their view of students' home lives and cast a decidedly negative view on non-school learning. Consider the dual messages in these statements:

> We need to take into consideration of 100 percent of the students that live in Hickory because this education facility can make or break each individual's life.
>
> [Ninety] % of education begins at home with parent instruction. The majority of our students have 0% instruction at home.
>
> Parents need help understanding that the only hope their children have is to attend and try at school.

Unfortunately, these statements reinforced the some teachers' unrelenting desire/need to see the average parent as an "uneducated hillbilly," a well- armed patriarch who was at odds with the school and teachers. This made it difficult to build allegiances beyond the campus. Even the handful of involved parents who regularly showed up for public forums or evening curriculum meetings were seen by faculty as evidence of how few parents were interested. And, in the eyes of teachers who were not involved in curriculum initiatives and who were watching the reforms take place from the sidelines, these exceptions proved the rule.

When considering their fellows as co-stakeholders in the new pro-KERA (or at least pro-reform) shift, Central staff noted that their forces remained divided. Some teachers were busy participating in the curriculum committee and other site-based council-sponsored committees, offering an array of ideas, such as Mrs. Cannaday's wish list:

> All classes incorpor'ting performance based events in classes, with classes having a heterogeneous mix of students, collaboration of teachers across the curriculum to develop thematic units and more.

But those who had become stakeholders through their committee and faculty meeting involvement still needed to convince the majority of Central's staff that they all had to contribute to a more challenging curriculum that did not let any children slip through the cracks. Some of their peers resented their busy peers' recommendations, and asserted that their motto for themselves and their colleagues would remain, "Get in your room. Teach your own class, and keep your mouth shut!"

What would it take to motivate them to join? Some teachers and parents sarcastically stated that they felt that money was the bottom line. In a specially-called parent-teacher forum, participants discussed what it would take to create sustainable change. But although money was often cited first, they decided, "is not enough." A handful of parents who gathered in a break- out group had the following exchange:

> Mrs. Nichols: "We've had a lot more money in the last few years [since KERA]. We've got more computers but the kids still do not have books. It's not been channeled the right way."
>
> Mrs. Thompson: "How much can money help if you don't love 'em?
>
> Mr. Keller: "We couldn't have done it without the money, but that's not enough. We need money, but we need to get our head straight first. And we need to do it now - we can not lose another generation! "

What then were the strongest motivators for teachers to challenge themselves and their students? In the Faculty Survey I three major motivators clearly emerged from the data. Twice as many people were motivated by seeing student achievement as were motivated by moral standards, and this latter group was, in turn, twice as large as those reporting being motivated by external rewards and acknowledgment. Therefore, four times as many people were motivated by student success as were motivated by receiving personal recognition for a job well done. "Caring about students, [seeing] that they achieve something, make something of their selves" was the most frequent type of response given. "Knowing that someone needs me and that I can make a difference in the life of a child" was also important. Working in a school provided some with the chance to "teach my students skills they will not have the opportunity to learn elsewhere." As in the answers to a previous question, numerous teachers stated that "my major motivational factor is when I finally get through to a student. Being able to accomplish something with one or two of them makes me want to do even more." Another respondent concurred:

> I love to see students get involved and excited about learning, nothing pleases me more than to see students feel like they have succeeded or accomplished something in my class.

And another person added "I don't know how I could be rewarded more than I am already through the success of my students."

A significant number of respondents found that "my motivation comes from within." Many traced this attitude of "self-discipline [and] self- motivation" back to "parents who always told us to give an honest effort in the things we undertook." Others felt an ongoing responsibility for excellence "because God requires it. My Mom and Dad instilled in me God-fearing values. That I might do my best in what ever job I undertake." Another wrote that on an ongoing basis, "the good feeling that I get from doing a job well motivates me." This may be reflected in one's "reputation. I take pride in what others think of me." Another respondent added, "I am a teacher by vocation. I always strive for the best, even though time plays a big roll [sic] on this! I can not always accomplish what I plan to do, but I have not regrets about trying."

But for others, internal and private recognition of their efforts remain paramount. A staff member commented:

> I think that making sure that all faculty are doing their jobs equally and preparing our students in a professional manner would provide sufficient incentives for all.

A person who found internal motivation wrote:

> I think that it has to be a personal thing. A person does a good job and is successful because he/she wants to be and is willing to do whatever it takes. The recognition or reward is secondary.

Finally, a few respondents agreed with the statement of one person that:

> I do not require any recognition or reward. I want my students to recognize that I am teaching for them. It doesn't matter whether it is now or when they are older. I teach because I love it.

Respondents in this latter group frequently mentioned being willing to wait for rewards. That was good, their colleagues warned, because for the moment things look more like chaos than progress. In order to achieve any significant and lasting changes, respondents acknowledged that the major focus must be on the involvement of all faculty. Future plans must "have the total commitment and cooperation of all faculty. We need to make a unified effort to improve the school environment." Plans must "include the backing, support, and belief that we will succeed by all [being] involved, top to bottom, support and cooperation." "The faculty must stand together to support this change" because "until then teachers learn to work together they cannot reach the students." Consensus building was deemed important, and discussions must "include the opinions of all the faculty and students." Such discussions required a "professional attitude from all our faculty." However, most respondents focused on voting, expressing the desire that plans "be discussed and voted on by the faculty and staff before it is implemented." While decisions should be "made by the entire faculty," most respondents would be satisfied with the support "of a majority of the faculty." Added another person, "The faculty should vote on such issues as rules, scheduling, and then site-based should honor it[s] faculty."

Other respondents expanded this concept to include all major groups; decisions should "involve a commitment from" and "be agreed upon by all stakeholders." Plans should "consider the needs of everyone" and "include everyone's input, such as teachers, parents, students, and principals." Others added administration and communities to this list. However, paramount was that everyone be included equally and have "everyone working together first" as well as "everyone being treated equal." Mrs. Conrad wanted them to come together and to have kids to come first. She stated that Central had to be there "for the improvement of the learning atmosphere for the students, not a power struggle for special interest groups."

Transformation of the Problem

Over the course of the 1994-1995 academic year underachievement in an unchallenging curriculum went from being a non-issue, "just the way it is here" to a "problem." Although not all faculty members had gotten on board, many faculty reported that they felt like they had a say in what their curriculum offered. Through participation in shared decision-making, they felt that they could create a more meaningful education for their students. Mr. Taylor, a parent member of a working group on curriculum reform, summed up this significant paradigm shift. He expressed a sense of hope that, he admitted, he had not felt for a long time:

> We always were on the very bottom of reading and math tests. Nobody expected us to do any differently. We just assumed that we were poor Appalachians and that was all the better we could do. We didn't think that we could change, but now, maybe as a result of us all pulling together, things can be different.

But in order to reform the curriculum in a sustainable way, those who had a stake in change had to convince those who had a stake in the status quo to go along with the reforms. The next section explores the major obstacle to broadening the base of support for providing a more meaningful education. The answer to why some teachers and staff resisted curriculum reforms lies in how they responded to the question of whether or not Central's offerings were "good enough."

The Question of "Good Enough"

When negotiating the terms on which they and their colleagues would adopt reforms of Central's curriculum, participants came head to head with the fact that still not everyone felt that the status quo should be changed. Those who wished to reform the curriculum had a difficult time motivating a significant number of their peers to join them. And as discussions about possible curriculum initiatives progressed, the level of resistance increased, both to the specific reforms as well as to those who had proposed reforms. After a faculty meeting, Mr. Jones remarked, "all the programs in the world won't amount to anything if people are not motivated to be part of it." There was little consensus about what should be done other than the shared belief that they had to acknowledge an even more deeply-rooted issue than the curriculum.

The major obstacle to reform was the assertion by a set of stakeholders that what they were doing continued to be good enough. The question of what constitutes "good enough" and for whom it was good reveals a great deal about the underlying power relationships that threatened to stalemate any proposed changes. It also exemplifies a pervasive attitude about change in general.

Two Examples

Two examples of how this paradigm were evoked provide the starting point for investigating this question. When assessing how "good" they were doing, many of the teachers used their own days at Central and their current position in the community as points of reference. Two teachers who had themselves attended Central had the following conversation one afternoon after a faculty meeting. Mr. Hathaway discussed his opposition to changes in the academic program:

> We don't need a different program. Besides, we came through the traditional program here [at Central] without KERA and we turned out just fine.
>
> Mrs. Jenkins: But the point is, what could we have done with more opportunities?
>
> Mr. Hathaway: But you're making a living, aren't you? We're doing OK.
>
> Mrs. Jenkins: Yeah, but it's about choices. And what's OK? Half of our kids fail and we're doing OK?!?!
>
> Mr. Hathaway: What more do you want?

The fact that students at Central were not being provided with the range or quality of opportunities to learn as children in even the next county was not an issue for Mr. Hathaway. His education had achieved its primary purpose: enabling him to find a good-paying job in his hometown. He had done well, he had a teaching job.

The second way that this paradigm was expressed was in teacher assertions that the job they were doing, if not excellent, was "good enough." During one of my classroom observations, Mr. Hamilton told his students to "get busy with something and hush!" and proceeded to tell me about his teaching philosophy:

> I'm not the greatest teacher in the world, other people aren't either, but its that way all over. . . I consider myself to be an average teacher, a "C" teacher. Some days a C-, some days a C+ teacher. I'm not an "A" one day and an "F" the next, just out to impress somebody. I don't try to make a positive impression. You can do whatever, but people'll work as hard as they want to work.

That particular day the students milled about the room, deciding for themselves what they would or would not do. Four were visibly engaged in an activity related to the thematic unit. But the majority leaned against the walls and talked, wrote letters, hung out the windows, and/or popped bubble gum bubbles as they sat gathered in circles in the corner of the room. This was indeed an average day in Mr. Hamilton's classroom.

"We Take Care of our Own First"

These two episodes reveal several critical facts about the meaning of educational institutions in Hickory County. First and foremost, the Hickory County schools are about employment for adults. Although the public schools may be prominent institutions in other settings, the degree to which they dominate Hickory County affairs is striking. Mr. Gray, a business owner, felt:

> It's more evident in a small community versus a larger one. In an eastern Kentucky district where the school board is the largest employer it just exaggerates the school board's influence. Teaching is not just another occupation, It is the most sought after job.

In fact, as some of Central's faculty reflected when asked what brought them to teaching, it seemed to be not only the best but the only realistic option. Mrs. Jenkins from the interaction above, commented later on the anger that the exchange had provoked in her. Like Mr. Hathaway, she too had considered teaching to be one of her few serious options if she wanted a career that she could pursue in the region. However, she also mused about whether she might have chosen a different path had she felt that there were more career options:

> All I ever knew was teaching. Teaching was all there was, all I knew. I guess I'd probably be a teacher if I could be anything, I love it! But back then I didn't know anything else. The point of KERA is to show our kids choices, show them there's a whole world, and that the world doesn't end with Hickory County.

In another exchange, two of Central's faculty members talked about how teaching provided them with a reasonable way through which to pursue the kinds of subjects that interested them. The two teachers were siblings; one had followed the other into employment with Central. They, several other teachers, and I were sitting at the teachers' table in the cafeteria, discussing what brought them into the teaching profession, and what brought them to all work at Central. As part of the conversation, the older of the pair asked the younger how things were going, and if he still had to get used to how things were done at Central. Over the fried chicken that was the cooks' tour de force, the teachers lamented their shared concerns about discipline, truancy, and lack of student engagement with their studies. The younger teacher, Mr. Collins, made a comment that he was surprised that students seemed so difficult, as he had always enjoyed school and learning. In fact, he had entered teaching because he wanted to continue in a field he found interesting. He had married locally, and felt that there was no other viable option than for him to learn to be a teacher. He summed up the decision, "I didn't really want to be a teacher, but what else is there if you want to live here?" He continued that, after a few years, he felt that teaching provided a good living and that he was getting used to it. He even liked it most days.

As a smart and likable young man in a well-connected family, it was reasonable for Mr. Collins to assume that he could get a job. There is a strong preference among most Hickory Countians to "hire our own." In a precedent setting move by the new administration and site-based council, three of the six new teachers hired in the 1994-1995 year came from outside of Hickory. Two of these lived in one of the counties that borders Hickory; nonetheless, they were considered to be outside the Hickory county social system. This fact was a raw spot for many teachers, who used the appointments as the impetus to reassert the long-standing norm of hiring locally. Those who opposed outside hires except when no local candidate could be cultivated, tended to cast the new teachers as a set, referring to them as all coming from the outside. Bryan, the son of two of Central's staff members, expressed his disgust at this infraction of the social code:

> One thing that really bothers me is that every teacher we have hired for a retired or departed teacher has been from out of town. While we have qualified people from right at home to teach, we hire others from out-of-town. This is not to say that these people aren't qualified, but I think we should take care of our own first.

There were many among both the students and faculty who shared Bryan's priorities.

Bryan's comment leads to another dimension to the code of hiring, namely that the local candidates need not be better, and need not even be outstanding in their own right, they just need to be "good enough." A parent explained the reasoning behind this practice, stating that succeeding generations needed to know that they could come back after schooling, that something would be held for them. As she explained, "it is important that kids grow up knowing that they will have a place here." Someone who possessed the certification had, in essence met the criteria to be considered for a job. Mrs. Jacobs, who came from a long family tradition of educators, said, "I'm not against hiring outsiders, but if they're equal then you should hire local. . . If the local person has the education and he wants to live here, why not?" So pervasive is the attitude that if you are "good enough" for your own people they will hire you, that one of the new "outsider" teachers was greeted by her students with the comment, "What's wrong, weren't you good enough for your own people? We always get dumped on here."

Further, local people, Central staff argued, "understand how we do things here." Those candidates who had attended Central themselves were deemed to be especially well-prepared to fit in and understand the local codes of conduct and observe the pre-established hierarchies of privilege. Mrs. Jacobs, who had lived essentially all her life in Hickory, reflected on what she assumed it would be like to work "outside." She argued that natives:

> Know the situation better. It's a different religious base, a different system, even from county to county here. Somewhere else, I'd be lost learning what needed to be done to be an instrumental part of anything.

But it was not enough to be simply local, one had to fit in and to know people who could be advocates with the superintendent, school board, or, with the weight of the hiring decisions shifting to the school level, with the SBC. In addition, knowing candidates informally meant that you knew more about them than a diploma or letter might reveal. Mr. Leonard agreed, "If you get a local person, you know what they do, that they're a good worker. You shouldn't penalize someone for being local if they're qualified." A former administrator added that when hiring he wanted to see, "If he's a nice guy, not a bloomin' idiot, not a bad guy, has no desire to change the status quo."

The result of following these minimalist and status quo criteria was a highly disparate range of qualifications and commitments among those who did secure teaching jobs. These very perspectives on hiring created dissent among the ranks of Central's faculty. Each person could name several co-workers who they were certain were hired because they were local favorites of someone with influence. However, when pressed, they were extremely hesitant to actually name names. Students were more candid. Whether they identified them personally or not, everyone acknowledged that there were teachers at Central who should not be there. Although they may once have met the criteria for being hired, they were neither good for the students nor their presence good for faculty morale.

Central was not the only school in the district that was seen by county residents as being less than optimally staffed. This sentiment was widespread among parents of children of all ages as well as those who no longer had children in school. On the survey distributed to all district employees as part of the search for a new superintendent, a cook, who had plenty to say about the teachers and the principal at her own school, wrote:

> The school system in Hickory County is a JOKE! The children are not getting a full education, because the simple reason some teachers are there for the money only. 80% of the faculty in the schools are not doing their 'Job.'

Added a teaching aide on that same survey:

> We have good schools but some of the teachers are not capable to teach dogs. There are some that are uncaring and shouldn't be allowed in the classroom. . . These so called 'teachers" should not be allowed to mentally destory a child's self esteem. Our children are the most important thing- Get teachers concerned or get OUT.

But those teachers were there to stay. All their colleagues at Central could do was work around them and lament in private, as one curriculum committee member often did, "It's robbery, it robbery! what some people do in their classes."

Maneuvering into a Better Position

In the minds of Hickory Countians, a second unalterable, if regrettable, aspect of how Hickory County schools operated is that some parents were able to strategically manipulate the system so that their children received the best education available. The fact that these parents did not feel that their neighborhood school was "good enough" for them created hard feelings between them and their neighbors. Such actions transgressed the regional ideal of everyone having an equitable chance by making explicit their desire to give their child every advantage.

The basis for parents' desire to switch schools was the perception that the elementary schools in the county and the high schools in the region were significantly different in what they provided for students. On the district-wide survey of school personnel that was done as part of the search for a new superintendent, one of the most common concerns was that the candidate recognize that the schools had not been treated equitably.

Facilitating this movement of students between schools was that fact that in Hickory County the school attendance boundaries were not officially defined. They were traditionally understood. Parents could thus make the case that they were eligible to attend the school they wanted. If their residence made such a claim improbable, it was well known that some parents simply filled in a false address or used a relative's address. In the 1994-1995 year, members of the central administration, under pressure from the state to determine how many children should actually be at each elementary school, had to establish boundaries within their district. In order to do so, they asked residents where they traditionally went to school, if those on the opposite side of a certain mountain ridge were at the same school, whether this new dirt road has been included on the bus route, etc. It was a difficult task that even required that they get out of the trucks and hike to the top of the ridge to see if indeed there were any people living up that way.

Despite the lack of formal lines, residents were very clear about who belonged where. Miss Gray, a convenience store clerk in her early twenties, expressed her frustration that one of her neighbors took her kids to another school with the intention of gaining an advantage over her neighbors. This young mother of two declared:

> Dripping Springs Elementary was good enough for me, for my kids, and so for my community. I don't know why some peoples has to have something else. Well, I do, they want that advantage that being at [Former Superintendent's Namesake] Elementary provides, they're the first to get something.

The fact that this neighbor lived within the traditional stronghold for the local elementary school and yet took her kids elsewhere only made her transgression seem worse. To Miss Gray, such an explicit maneuver was evidence that this woman had "gotten above her raising," and did not think that the local elementary was "good enough." Miss Gray conceded that there were certainly things she felt were lacking at Dripping Springs, beginning with a playground and a library, but that her neighbor should have opted for sticking together rather than abandoning ship altogether.

Parents' desires to move had to be approved by the receiving school's administrators. This was usually done on an individual level, with no public accountability. The result was that parents were convinced that at the high school level, only those students with significant abilities, sports aptitudes, good grades, or who brought along involved parents supportive of the administration and the respective school board member were admitted. Students who had been having trouble were less likely to get in to other schools; they were more likely to have to remain at Central. Or, if they were enrolled in another high school, they were encouraged to enroll at Central the following year. Whether accurate or not, some students referred to Central High as a "dumping ground" for those who could not go or were not welcome anywhere else. The result was that students were affirmed in their belief that this was all the better they were going to have it, that others had deemed Central to be "good enough" for them. But the fact that some parents did not consider the local schools good enough for *their* own children was not lost upon them.

A Self-Referential World

A third aspect of the how Hickory County public schools were administered was that they were a world unto themselves. Determinations about what is "good enough" were made primarily based on internal comparison rather than relative to schools elsewhere. A community leader made the following comparison:

> If you could continue to be a big powerful man in Hickory, who cares if Hickory is the bottom of the bottom? You're a big fish in a little pond and that's OK if you are going to stay in that little pond.

To take the analogy further, those who benefited from their positions of leadership, those who benefited from the minimal demands being made of them, and those who felt that they were doing well relative to others in that little pond had little reason to expand the pond. In fact, they had a stake in keeping the pond as exclusive as possible.

This frame of mind reinforces another perspective on change that was prevalent among educators as well as the relatively unschooled. People felt that their way of life in Hickory County was good relative to a set of standards established in the Bible. Although not perfect, it was good relative to what they believed about the rest of the United States based on MTV, cable television, and on the radio. Like Mrs. Richards, the teacher who had remarked that the teens in the lunchroom "are still innocent," other parents felt that there was much that they and their children did not know about "the world out there." And, they did not want to know, either. A retired teacher talked about how this ethic of not feeling compelled to seek out extraneous information played out. Mrs. Rogers explained:

> People think, 'I don't know anything about it, so what does it affect you? ' We're too busy with day to day living. Now, my neighbor might come over and we'd sit on the porch and talk about it, but you don't go searching."

External information and standards were largely seen as irrelevant if they did not also have some local validity. If something was applicable to their situation, they would hear about it in church or through friends, but there was no need to chase after every latest trend that swept through mainstream America. People preferred to wait and see for themselves. What they had was "good enough" until something else came along that one could be convinced would be better. Just because something worked or was approved somewhere else didn't mean that it should be simplistically adopted in Hickory County.

The belief that people should decide for themselves, and not thoughtlessly imitate others was further expanded in the conviction that one should see for oneself. Respect for this hands-on, first-hand way of understanding was reflected the comment made to me. Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, who had invited me over for a "real country dinner," were glad that I was seeking out common knowledge about life in the county. They explained, "An education broadens your horizons." My host continued, gesturing over the home cooked "country style" meal that she had proudly prepared for me, "Just that you came down here, now you have a different slant versus people who've just passed through. Your horizons have been broadened." She continued, drawing on an example from her own recent experiences, "I appreciate differences- like Hindus who don't eat meat. I'm not offended and I respect it. You get to thinkin' maybe my way is not the only way." "However," she announced decidedly, setting her fork down, "I draw the line at salvation. If you don't believe in Jesus Christ you don't have a lick of a chance in Heaven."

Challenging the Status Quo

Contrary to those who felt that the Hickory County schools are "good enough" are the majority who asserted the education provided at Central was not nearly sufficient. On the second survey, 65.6 percent of Central's faculty and staff "did not agree at all" or "agreed only a little" with the statement, "I am satisfied with the achievement levels of our schools in this county" (X=2.28, SD= 1.01, mode= 2: "I only agree a little"). Interestingly, only 45.9 percent disagreed strongly with "Our schools are good enough for us" (X=2.44, SD= 1.03, mode= 3: "I agree some of the time"). However, those who wanted to change Central's curriculum felt they were in a precarious position to demand change. Mr. Walter, a teacher, presented the problem, "Anybody that tries to make change is putting himself on the spot just as much as the person they're going after. People see it as personal gain, playing politics, puttin' your butt on the line." The result was that few were willing to risk their own relatively good jobs, be it teaching, driving bus, or working at the utilities company, or the future employment of a member of their family. The father of a Central student summed up the general attitude that he saw around him:

> Many accept 'it's as good as we can get.' There's no outcry demanding better. Even educators aren't complaining about more and better education. They just don't think they can or they don't care. But, if we're losing the UK basketball team people get really upset and there'd be three editorials in the paper.

Another community member added:

> People would like it, but they don't want to demand it. It's politics if the family depends on a teacher's income. The school is very political and it's the largest employer.

Fear of reprisals extended from those in the highest positions, who had the most to lose, to those with very little, but who were loathe to lose of what precious little they had.

Mr. White, a long-time resident, added that he felt that this trend had become even more pronounced as people became more mobile and loosened their ties with the land itself. Over the years many had sold their family lands under Broad Form Deeds to the strip mining companies, or sold to a few patriarchs who, together, owned the majority of property in the county. Mr. White was angered and even frightened by this loss of connection to land, because he felt that it undermined local people's sense that they still had something of their own worth fighting for. He stated, "There's little sense of worth, no pride in place. There's so little sense that it can be better. People are hopeless, goalless, and don't feel powerful to do anything about it."

Because the county school district is contiguous with the county line, "there is," as one local woman explained, "a vast intermingling of politics of the school board with the politics of the community." Because the school is the largest buyer of copy machines and supplies, a large consumer of coal for the furnaces, and a key customer for utilities, the result is "that you're not as critical as you would like to be." Said another professional who operated his own business, "Independent business people don't speak out. They'd facefriendship reprisals"

Given these real constraints on insiders to effectively exert pressure on the school system, is external pressure the answer? Although the saga of state intervention in Central High is far from a conclusion, the interactions exemplify the different, but related, challenges that state reformers face in trying to motivate change. These external authorities were seen as not understanding that "this is Hickory County, things are different here." And those who benefited from the minimal standards that prevailed and the system of hiring that was in place were not about to change what was "good enough" for them.

Further, in the moral code of Hickory County, these external evaluators or so-called "experts" had no right to criticize local actors. Those natives who flaunt their book knowledge above those with common knowledge, act like experts who have all the answers, or are explicit about their manipulation of the school system for their own children's benefit are considered to act inappropriately; they have "gotten above their raising." In a similar way, those from the outside, e.g. state officials and investigators, who declare local practices or pedagogy to be insufficient or unworthy of the children's potential are perceived as mocking Hickory County adults' achievements. In a parallel way, many staff resented the implications inherent in the KIRIS assessments that they were incompetent or below standard. Like Mrs. Rogers who stated that she had no right to criticize her mother for making the choices about education that she did in what was a very different setting, staff at Central resent the assumption that external people should judge the kinds of strategic decisions that they have made. In response to external statements that students did not perform well enough, teachers like Mr. Hathaway and Mr. Hamilton in the examples above took demands to improve their performance as personal affronts. Claims that their teaching or attitudes were not "good enough" implied that they were insufficient relative to some other set of standards. These men did not feel that they needed to live up to these external standards. They were, as the saying goes, big fish who were satisfied with their little pond. State officials who exhorted these teachers to hop on the reform bandwagon, to do something more, were thus, paradoxically, alienating them further.

The tensions between those who believed that the status quo was good enough and those who believed it must be challenged led to repeated conflicts about curriculum reform at Central. More often than not, the central issues at stake were not those about the merits of a particular initiative, but what these changes would mean to the way education in Hickory County was conducted. Knowing that these conflicts would significantly impact whatever curriculum reforms were proposed, stakeholders who were active in reforming Central's curriculum ventured ahead. The next section compares the two major initiatives during the 1994-1995 year at Central. This discussion brings together themes developed in the previous sections to compare and contrast the key reasons that one of these initiatives passed the faculty vote and the other could not.

Two Initiatives in Curriculum Reform

Common Ends

Involved members of the faculty and administration proposed two major initiatives with the aim of challenging Central's largely unchallenging curriculum. Faculty members of the curriculum committee spearheaded an effort to bring these innovations to their colleagues' attention. Participants built on some of the rationales presented earlier for taking action, e.g. contributing to community development as in "we want to produce productive citizens who contribute through their vocation," and an education is worth something if it leads to employment as in "if they see that the class is worth something, that they can use after school." They also acknowledged that "we have a student population that could benefit" from more focused and coherent plans of study as well as classes that built interdisciplinary links for students. "We haven't prepared them for the workforce, and some of 'em not even for college, " lamented Mrs. Rogers.

In the process, more than just course content were challenged. Changing the curriculum struck at long-standing hierarchies of faculty privilege, preferential selection of students, the relative centrality of departments, and the ability of certain cohorts of faculty to resist any idea of which they did not approve. The discussions about which and how classes should be taught churned up more than just differences about pedagogical style and content. In the increasingly frequent and heated faculty meetings, conflicts arose about whose courses should have priority and what kinds of changes might be required of faculty. While in the past, some of the discussion about reforms at Central had passed somewhat unnoticed, the ever-widening and high profile debate about "curriculum" created stakeholders where before there were only passive, indifferent classroom managers.

The two initiatives share many things in common, yet there were important differences in how they were pursued. The department of education encourages schools to at least consider changes in the way the school day and year are organized. One of the strategies for achieving this was moving from the traditional six or seven period day to a block schedule. In this new system, students would study a class for a two hour block for only one semester.

Block Scheduling

Students and faculty had many concerns about what this might mean. One of the fundamental issues at stake in discussions about block scheduling would be the degree to which classroom instruction should, even, must, change to make full use of the extended periods but half-year schedule. Proponents wanted to see more cross-disciplinary teaching and innovative use of class time. They felt that the extended class hours would provide a way for students to put in more concentrated time on task.

But students as well as many teachers felt that block meant that they would simply be doing the same things for longer periods. Those students who supported block hoped that they would be able to lean more, for as Tina, asked, "how much can you learn in one hour?" While reasonable, this comment reveals much about the current use of classroom time. Terrance complained that several of his teachers did not do much active teaching. Sitting around our private interview table in a side room off the library, Terrance's friend Barry corroborated his story that one of their teachers' usual pedagogy consisted of stating, "'Open to page whatever and start reading,' and then he sits back and reads a sports magazine."

The crunch for classroom time is exacerbated in several subjects by a dearth of textbooks. Because there are not enough books for each student to take one home, in response, some teachers use a considerable portion of the hour for students to do "homework" with the texts, instead of providing instruction. Building on this model of using class time for homework, Candi added that she felt that block scheduling would give students more time to complete homework in class, and "by having less homework students will be able to become more involved with extra-curricular activities."

Students would be able to change courses after one semester, a prospect that was appealing for many. Christi put it succinctly:

> I also like the edea of having four completely different classes after the first semester. Students and teachers need a break from each other, and with the four block system you would only have to look at one another for half a year instead of a whole year.

But for those students who were involved in fine arts or technology programs, and who wanted to participate in the year long season, block was a considerably more problematic proposal.

Tech Prep

Tech Prep is a short hand way of referring to a set of vocationally- oriented technology intensive approaches to curriculum. Related programs included High Schools that Work, School To Work, Jobs for Kentucky's Graduates; some of these were already somewhat or fully established at Central. Proponents of getting more involved in Tech Prep wanted to provide a more integrated and comprehensive program that could, potentially, reach all students. Asked why they wanted sign on the High Schools that Work Initiative, members of the Tech Prep working group stated in unison, " 'cause we're a high school that doesn't work!"

Like block, Tech Prep encourages teachers to work across disciplines. Students are further encouraged to develop coherent plans of study so that their high school years bring them to a completion of a course of study that is a solid enough basis for them to build upon it. Members of the committee and working group felt that students entered high school with unrealistic expectations and little awareness of what it would take for them to get a job, especially if they planned on pursuing it elsewhere. Mrs. Thomas added:

> Our kids live in this little dream world - I don't know if it's this area or kids in general - they think that they don't have to work until the very end and then it will just come to them.

Stakeholders who wanted to see Tech Prep flourish felt that expanding the offerings would help all kids. As another member commented, "We need to implement school to work opportunities - and why is it just for some kids?" - we need to prepare all for some kind of post secondary schooling."

"Whose Idea Was This, Anyway?"

In the process of discussing the committees' recommendations at faculty meetings and in informal gatherings, several key areas of contention arose. First, many faculty members wanted to know, "Just whose idea was this?" For those who were convinced that what they had been doing was good enough, they saw little reason to make such drastic changes. Others were more concerned about who was behind the initiative so that they could make a decision about the program's merits based upon whether it would help or hurt someone they liked or disliked. The new administrators joined several enthusiastic supporters from the curriculum committee who had seen block work well in some other regional schools or in their previous positions. In this, block scheduling took a fatal blow as those who had a stake in undermining the new administration emphasized to their peers that block "was Newmann's and the outsiders teachers' thing." Those who came to oppose block because it was associated with externally-imposed change drew further strength from their peers' suspicions and pessimism about change in general.

The staff at Central repeatedly voiced the opinion that they did not need to change just for the sake of changing. On the Faculty Survey I, 27.9 percent of Central's faculty and staff "definitely agreed" or "agreed most of the time" with the strongly worded, "We should only make changes if they can fit our situation here, whether they are required or not." Even if required by KERA, a large number of Central's staff did not want to draw attention to themselves by becoming a model school. They felt that they already had enough unwanted attention from the state. Only 13 faculty definitely agreed that, "We should adopt required changes so that we can be in the forefront of change." Further, there was skepticism that just because a reform such as block worked somewhere else, it might be good for Central. Thus reaction was mixed with the statement, "If changes worked somewhere else, they will probably work here too" (X=2.81, SD= 1.07). The modal response, or 31.1 percent of faculty, checked " I only agree a little."

Another area of contention arose over who would have to become involved. Clearly, block scheduling would have required that all teachers (perhaps not the segregated TMH teachers) change. In contrast, only those who wanted to teach a section or a course that was part of Tech Prep needed to do so.

In the end, both initiatives came down to a vote. Tech Prep sailed through. Because it was tied into a larger set of programs that were already well established, it was seen as bringing resources and opportunities to those faculty members who wanted to be part of it. The working group, led by several veteran teachers, had researched the options and opportunities well and were enthusiastic supporters.

When block scheduling came up for a vote it went down in blazing glory. Those who had serious concerns about what block had done to other fine arts programs continued to express serious reservations, as did those who had other concerns about logistics. Several teachers felt that as a faculty they were "not ready to change our teaching" in ways that would make block successful. But by far, people were very clear that they were not absolutely opposed to block, they just wanted to send a message to what they saw as an over ambitious administrators and headstrong rookie teachers that change would not come to Central's faculty so easily. Mr. Hathaway was clear to note what so many others stated indirectly, "It wasn't a vote against block, it was a vote against them!"

The way faculty handled the voting itself reveals much about their underlying attitudes and frustrations. Administrators had tried to build consensus in the months previous to the faculty meeting in which they finally, in desperation, called for a vote. After nearly an hour of debate and unsuccessful public straw polls that faculty resisted participating in, Mrs. Walker asked for faculty to raise their hands if they wanted to quit working for consensus and simply vote. Nearly everyone raised their hands. After a moment of shocked silence, those assembled laughed at their inconsistency. Mr. Hamilton summed it up, "I guess the only thing that we can have consensus on is that we'll never have consensus!"

Creating Equal Access

Competition for Classes and Teachers

In the end, changes or modifications to the curriculum will not enhance equity if they are not equally accessible for all students. Students recognized that there were different tracks into which they were slotted upon entry to high school. Dylan divided the courses, stating "There's the Tech Prep, college bound, regular and dumping ground classes." In their informal handbooks, upper class students noted that it was very important to try to get in as good and challenging courses as one could. This was, the authors noted, especially important during the freshman year when there were usually over 400 students per grade. Amy and Candy remembered, "We had a really big class when we started as freshmen, and you really had to struggle to get in the good classes." Three years and 200 classmates fewer, seniors found that there were still tricks to getting the classes and teachers that would propel them along the college track. One had to know a teacher and request that one be put on the preferred list. But access at Central was much more than just a matter of division of students into classes. Mrs. Meyers noted:

> Students need time to participate more in their own education. By this I mean, if they need/want to use the library or computer lab they have no time to do so unless their teacher takes the whole class. They should not have to give up their lunch time in order to check out a book or print a paper.

Her response was to support block scheduling: "I believe the answer is block scheduling/flex time. But even with more flexible time in the classes, teachers had to explicitly address how resources were actually distributed. They needed to talk candidly about how to allocate the new opportunities to make the system work for all kids. The provision of more resources through the SEEK funds and technology initiatives in KERA have not necessarily led to more widespread or equal access to these resources. Just because there are more computers in the school or new library acquisitions does not mean that all students will be welcome to use them. Students who are well-connected or who have an advocate among the faculty and staff feel comfortable using the library after school. Such students can talk a staff person into letting them use the computer lab during lunch of after school. On the other hand, those who have parents who have been very outspoken in the site-based council, or who have no informal connection to the key school personnel through church or other social groups reported feeling ostracized, even harassed. Further, the school district has only shown minimal commitments to equalizing student access to after-school tutoring or extracurricular activities by providing transportation. At the time that I left Hickory County, buses were provided only one day a week. This is not a trivial matter; one in five Hickory County families does not have even one vehicle; fewer still have a reliable vehicle that can make it down the rough-washed gravel roads that wind their way, serpent like, down the slippery winter hillsides. Nor is it a trivial investment on the part of the county schools. Like most rural districts, transportation is a considerable part of the budget. Covering an entire county that has no public transportation whatsoever is no mean task.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SECOND STORY:
BROADENING THE BASE OF REPRESENTATION

The Plan

In the beginning was the plan
and then came the assumptions
and the assumptions were without form
and the plan was without substance
and the darkness was upon the face of the teachers
and they spoke amongst themselves, saying,
"It is a crock of shit, and it stinketh!"
And the teachers went unto their Sitebased Councils and sayeth,
"It is a pail of dung and none may abide the odor thereof."
And the Sitebased Councils went unto their Principals
and sayeth unto them,
"It is a container of excrement and it is very strong,
such that none may abide by it."
And the Principals went unto their Superintendents and sayeth,
"It is a vessel of fertilizer and none may abide its strength."
And the Superintendents spoke amongst themselves,
saying to one another,
"It contains that which aids educational growth, and it is very strong!"
And the Superintendents went unto the State Department of Education
and sayeth unto them,
"It promotes growth and is very powerful."
And the State Department of Education
went unto Boysen and sayeth unto him,
"This new plan will actively promote the growth and efficiency
in education, and in these areas in particular."
And the Commissioner looked upon the plan
and saw that it was good,
and the plan become policy.
"This is how shit happens."

- Anon.

- photocopied flyer that was displayed at Central High

The Problem

Few Public Forums

One of the long-standing problems that bothered many of Central's professional staff was that decisions reflected a only very narrow set of interests. They felt that they average teacher, much less the average parent, had few if any public, accountable means for expressing an opinion, proposing a policy change (or that a policy be created), or stating what they would like Central to provide for students.

Instead of representative decision-making structures, Hickory Countians were used to their schools being led by men who made firm decisions. The rationale behind these decisions was seldom articulated. In a round of circular logic, the rationale behind this practice stated that there was little need to involve the "average person" because he or she was too "uneducated" and "uninformed" to understand.

"You Always Blame the Person Higher Up."

When describing the traditional mode of leadership in the Hickory County schools, the most common phrase speakers used was that they lived under a "benevolent dictatorship." While this might seem like derogatory term, most speakers found it to be an over all positive experience.

For when a teacher, parent, or citizen had little choice but to create a public appearance of compliance and uniformity, there seemed to be few problems. They were motivated to keep whatever unofficial actions they were doing out of the public eye, for that was highly regulated space. The result was often that informal or alternative spaces were less closely regulated so as to create an outlet for students or citizens to channel their unacceptable behaviors. As long as one did not "create problems for" administrators, the arrangement was that one could lead a relatively unconstrained life. For example, although some students used tobacco and marijuana daily at Central, they respected faculty and administrators' desires not to see too much of it and smoked behind the school, in their cars, in the bathrooms, etc. A former administrator stated that as a result he saw "no problem with drugs at Central." However, other students were much more likely to acknowledge the extent of actual use. In fact, they listed it as one of their top concerns.

Both those on the top and those on the bottom seemed to benefit. A result of this compact of complicity was that no one had to have a hard hand and be in control, but no one was totally out of control either. Members of the Central community, whether teen or adult, were kept in line by their peers. If that was not enough, administrators could hold out the threat of serious intervention. But because official sanctions seemed to be capriciously and harshly applied when they were done, they need not be frequent to be effective.

A second related side effect of having a person who took ultimate control of school affairs was that there was a clear target to scapegoat when a policy was decreed that one did not like. The fact that Mr. Newmann occasionally apologized to the faculty for giving them a wrong date or information did not make him look stronger in his faculty's eyes. Instead, he was finally taken aside and told the code of the school:

> You have to understand something about how things work around here - you never, never take the blame for anything - you always blame the person higher up.

Parents gathered at a basketball game expressed concern about the practice of undermining their leaders. They felt that this was yet another example of disrespect for authority that was becoming all too prevalent in their county. Mr. Gray, a parent, stated, "We need to build up our leaders, have positive praise from parents, encourage them, not just tear them down all the time."

The long-standing rule of public appeasement and private non-compliance enabled teachers to feel that they were doing the leader a favor when they followed his suggestion. If they liked the policy, they would give him the benefit of the doubt that it would work. If they didn't like the policy or the leader the invoked the practice of blaming him for the additional work and actively strategized how they would prove the measure unworkable. Whatever their take on a particular reform, the standing maxim was to resist and cut corners where possible so as not to look like one was a patsy to the "dictator." Students also reflected this attitude of going along with what they were told, but trying to do a minimal effort. Most felt that the KIRIS tests were an unfair, demanding imposition on their time. Most had little personal stake in the school's score on the KIRIS tests. In fact, one of the few ways that students had to resist was to purposely put out little effort in the hopes that their teachers would bear the repercussions. Mrs. Collins, a parent, explained what she saw as the ultimate result of this practice:

> students report that they are taking (KIRIS) tests 'for the teacher.' The kids think that if we get by with something we've fooled the faculty instead of seeing that they hurt themselves.

When students or teachers felt that they had little stake in the success of a policy, a state Reform Act, or the unwanted new outsider principal Mr. Newmann they were more than willing to undermine the leader. *They* did not ask for KERA or a new discipline policy, why should they follow it? It was the administration's faulty that they had to do it in the first place. In a similar line of thought, it was the Legislature's fault that they had KERA. Because many wanted to see their new leader and the new Reform Act go away, they had a stake in the mandates or administrators' failure. As a result, faculty, staff, and even students felt little compunction to come together and support most any decision that came down from above.

"We Need to Have a Bonding."

Many faculty and staff members at Central were clearly disturbed by this duplicity. Asked in Faculty Survey I[1] to identify the top three problems that needed addressing, faculty and staff mentioned division within their ranks and disengagement from decision-making as a top area of concern. Faculty skepticism that they actually had a stake in decisions fed the lack of camaraderie and cooperation. Respondents were concerned about the "lack of motivation" and "faculty involvement" and the "need [for] togetherness among teachers." Others mentioned "teacher moral [morale]." "Our faculty needs to have a bonding" wrote another, to effect "attitude changes among faculty members.

"We need to try to work together - toward the same goals" wrote another set of respondents. Another stated that "it's time administration makes decisions and we go with them," adding the caveat "if we know what direction we need to go, make decisions based on needs instead of wants." Several survey completers noted that this change of attitude especially needed to extend to KERA-related changes:

> more teachers need to apply KERA within the classrooms rather than continually denying that it is an important part of our schools or refusing to change because

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[1] I administered Faculty Survey I in November, 1994. In conjunction with the new prinicpals who were concerned about how their first semester was going, I designed, administered, and analyzed a survey about major problems, resources, areas of improvement, facilities, attitudes about parental involvement, etc. Through extensive personal follow -up with faculty, I received 94.4 percent of the surveys back - only four people out of seventy-two staff and faculty members did not return a survey. Two people refused to complete surveysm but by interviewing them at length abotu 'what they would have written down," I was able to complete a proxy survey for them. A couple of people even went through the trouble of mailing them to me so that I would receive them in time.

> they disagree with KERA. We have much at stake and even if we disagree with some components of KERA, it is a necessity and reality that we must deal with.

Again they noted the need for consistency and consensus. Teachers were concerned that "across the board consistency is needed in terms of teachers and administrators supporting the many changes (discipline code and KERA) we are facing."

In order to achieve these changes, respondents acknowledged that the major focus must be on the involvement of all faculty. Future plans must "have the total commitment and cooperation of all faculty. We need to make a unified effort to improve the school environment." Plans must "include the backing, support, and belief that we will succeed by all [being] involved, top to bottom, support and cooperation." "The faculty must stand together to support this change" because "until then teachers learn to work together they cannot reach the students."

Consensus building was deemed important. Faculty wanted discussions that "include the opinions of all the faculty and students." Such discussions required a "professional attitude from all our faculty." However, most respondents focused on voting, expressing the desire that plans "be discussed and voted on by the faculty and staff before it is implemented." While decisions should be "made by the entire faculty," most respondents were ready to be content with less than a full consensus. They would have been satisfied with the support "of a majority of the faculty." "The faculty should vote on such issues as rules, scheduling, and then site-based should honor it[s] faculty" added another person.

Other respondents expanded this concept to include all major groups; decisions should "involve a commitment from" and "be agreed upon by all stakeholders." Plans should "consider the needs of everyone" and "include everyone's input, such as teachers, parents, students, and principals." Others added administration and communities to this list. However, paramount was that everyone be included equally and they have "everyone working together first" as well as "everyone being treated equal."

Administrators and office personnel tried to encourage faculty to think about what their common interests might be by putting little slogans on the daily absentee and announcement sheet. A frequent theme in the "Thought for the Day" was the need to listen to one another and find common goals. One of the little slogans that aroused a great deal of rancor was one about how everyone needed to be in the same boat and to bail each other out or they would all sink together. In a interview months later, Mr. Clearsy, a pastor, invoked the same image. He noted that it seemed that Central's faculty were particularly resistant to the idea of thinking of themselves as being in the same boat. He wanted them to strive for "fellowship," which he explained as:

> As we say in church, fellowship is two fellows in a ship. If there is agreement on goals they can go in one direction. If there are various goals and desires they just pull against each other.

However, few faculty members openly appreciated the little slogans. Some even responded derisively when they received their sheets, stating that they were but more "Band-Aids" for their "deep wounds."

Times of Crisis

At times it seemed that the linked problems of lack of representation, cohesion, and undermining leaders' decisions threatened to overcome those who wanted to see reforms come to Central. It was in these times of need that teachers told themselves and me the Myth of the Great Flood.

This story is based in reality, and is therefore not a myth in the sense of being fictitious. Rather it is a myth in that it is a shared way of expressing key ideas about community solidarity. The stories that form the myth together create an ideal against which to balance the realities of every day splinter groups.

Residents tell of the many recent times in which their homes, stores, families, and communities have been threatened by the torrential spring rains. For most of the first quarter of each year the Boone River and its innumerable tributaries are prone to back up and over low-lying roads and bottoms in the county. About twenty years ago, Hickory County almost lost a significant portion of its neighborhoods due to unusually high waters that topped even the highest artificial dams. Residents came together to sandbag the towns and roads. They fortified bridges. They ferried children, elders, and livestock to safety. The National Guard came to help, but it was community members selflessly giving of their time and resources that saved the day.

Community members drew on stories of when they came together to note that they could cooperate when it represented their common interests to do so. They were proud that they had a volunteer fire department while the town in the next county had to pay theirs. A business leader also noted that coming together to fight the big flood carried over into other civic activities;

> As a child I can remember my Dad going out . . . and with that particular flood I was old enough to go out and help, plus it was a devastating flood. And you look at other things like when the community came together to revitalize the downtown, the local merchants, the city and the bank, saying 'Hey we don't

> want to lose our downtown and we want to help save it' and they made a big investment in time and money.

This myth provided a sense of being able to overcome even the most difficult of situations. Their problems could, like the rising waters, be held back. Faculty myth-tellers believed that if a sufficient crisis arose, they could come together because they had done so into past when a common danger threatened.

Forums for Decision-Making

The Reform Act's emphasis on decentralization has as a goal broadening the base of representation in school reforms. To these ends, KERA recognizes the need to give local parents and teachers formal, legal means through which to become stakeholders in the process of making decisions.

One of the key provisions in the Reform Act thus was site-based decision making. By giving a team of parents and educators the legal authority to make decisions for their school, drafters hoped to help those closest to the children and the local situation make the best decisions. The site-based decision-making council and its spin-off committees along with regular faculty meetings provided new forums for faculty, staff, and parents at Central to have their views and interests represented in decisions.

Site-based Councils (SBC)

Many at Central were initially excited at the prospect of broadening the base of representation. Even those teachers who did not like the people who were eventually elected to serve on Central's SBC and did not like many of their policies felt that in the abstract, participatory decision-making was a good thing. They felt that if the reforms were to reflect local priorities and problems, those closest to the school should have more say. Mr. Hamilton, a teacher, explained:

> Local people want to make their own decisions. Local people know local people's needs, more than someone who's not in place, who has direct association with the community. They don't know what the local situation is, how to make things work. The higher ups don't understand what is going on. You can't [make changes] coming from some control center - how could you?

Teachers felt that the site- based could be a way for them to identify their own needs and band together as an identifiable set of stakeholders. Mr. Hamilton noted, "this year, we've started to pull together *as teachers*."

The sense that they were a special constituency with their own interests was built on the assumption that they were (potentially) at odds with educational administrators. Like the anonymous author of "The Plan" presented at the beginning of the story, those at the grassroots were worried that there were too many layers of decision-makers, each with their own agendas and ways of presenting the problem. They were afraid that their interests would be misrepresented or ignored. Mrs. Wilkins added that she felt that they could represent their interests better than the school board:

> I think that site-based is good. It's high time that teachers got some input. I've always resented the fact that some on the School Board don't have a college education and they're running a school system. They don't know enough to really be involved in it themselves, enough to know what's going on

Others cited a lack of confidence in the principals. Distrust of those who the superintendent had rewarded with principalships was common. Thus, many teachers felt that it was not enough to give principals more authority, the power to make decisions had to reach down to the furthest levels. In fact, # percent of Central's faculty checked "do not agree at all" or "agree only a little" with the statement, "I trust the principals to make the best decisions that will be for the good of the children in this county."

At a public forum that Central teachers hosted to discuss discipline issues at Central , Mr. Adams, a parent, expressed the view that SBCs also offered a viable means to generate consensus among Central's faculty. He stated:

> Eastern Kentucky starts a little behind (less money). I don't want to blame things on that, but these new ideas, like site-based gives us a chance to overcome these individual weaknesses - through it we can build consensus.

Consensus, however, was another source of division. For those used to a model of leadership where one person made all the decisions, consensus signified that now no one person was in charge. Further, many staff members at Central interpreted consensus to mean that no one took responsibility for a decision instead of signifying that everyone had a stake in the decision that they all agreed upon. A further concern was that others wondered if, as the anonymous author of "The Plan" presented at the front of this story satirized, SBC created too many layers of decision-makers, if too make stakeholders would be involved and the desires of those on the bottom would be misrepresented.

A further concern with SBC was expressed by those who had benefited from the previous top-down decision-making structures. Most of these educators felt that SBCs did not enhanced grassroots control, at least as they defined it. Members of the board and some central office staff agreed with the colleague who stated:

> With KERA and site-based it's school control versus local control. The school board is elected by the public - it's in the constitution of the school board. [If the public doesn't like the board,] vote 'em out! That's the American way.

He continued, noting, "School boards are elected. All have the opportunity to vote. If they're more dissatisfied people run them out, if they're not bad dissatisfied they don't." Other educators pointed to the fact that SBCs are less accountable to the general public than are school boards. Only parents of current students were allowed to join certified teachers and vote in the SBC elections. Superintendent McAllister concurred with members of his staff:

> Overall KERA has not enhanced local control - they voter can't influence their school board as much. . . people don't go to the site-based. And anyway, the principal has the say. People don't have the same access to [site-based] that people do to the board, people think they [SBC members] won't have to fool with them and they [SBC members] probably won't. Therefore general people feel disenfranchised.

Despite these concerns and limitations, overall Central staff felt that the 1994-1995 year would likely bring some interesting changes to the way they approached joint problem solving.

As stated in Chapter One, Central High has had SBCs since districts were eligible to implement them. The council is composed of two parents (elected by those parents who came to vote through a PTA-sponsored election), three teachers (elected by the teachers), and the principal who serves as chair. They have not formally added any other members.[2] Although any member of the public, teaching staff, or other educators were welcome, few people attended Central's SBC meetings. A representative of the local press, one or both of the school board members who had children at Central, a few parents who were active in school extracurricular activities, the assistant principal and I were the only regular attendees. Occasionally, a member of the student council, a teacher, or former parent members of the SBC also came.

The Council was responsible for significant decisions. They made decisions regarding instructional materials, budget, personnel assignments, curriculum, student support services, extracurricular programs, discipline policies, use of school facilities, use of professional development funds, and other elements of school-level management. The 1994-1995 Council had also selected the new principal, Mr. Newmann, and appointed Mrs. Walker to be the second vice-principal. The Councils also hired six new teachers right before school commenced in August. Mr. Newmann lived up to his interview promises to be an avid supporter of site-based decision making. A veteran teacher who had long argued for greater teacher involvement in decision-making, he wanted Central's SBC to take on a much more visible and active role in participatory decision-making.

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[2] None of the SBC members were people of color. There is only one African American staff member and he is actually a district rather than school-level employee. Central's 98 percent white enrollment did not necessitate a special election to add a representative of color to the council.

Site-based councils were critical in enhancing the status of women in decision-making. Only once before Mrs. Walker was appointed had there been a female high school administrator in Hickory County. There had never been a female superintendent (nor, as is described in the next story, was there support for one) and only a few female school board members. Although women accounted for 43 of Central's 64 teaching staff, they had been decidedly underrepresented in the administration. However, of the 14 people who had been teacher or parent representatives, 8 had been women.

Three years after site-based decision-making was officially instituted in Hickory County's Central High, a pivotal question remained unanswered: Just whose interests were these representative supposed to represent? The degree to which tensions about this question simmered below the surface had been masked by the SBC's lack of real opportunities to make significant decisions. However, when the SBC decided to hire Mr. Newmann over a local favorite, these tensions erupted in a searing conflagration. The scars of this explosion will take a long time to heal.

Almost immediately after the news of Mr. Newmann's selection was made, faculty members, distraught at the decision, wrote a letter to the Department of Education demanding that their SBC be disbanded. By selecting Mr. Newmann, SBC members had not reflected the will of the majority of the teachers. Site-based council members felt that Newmann would be a better candidate because of his support for and understanding of KERA, his leadership roles while a teacher, and his instructional leadership skills. However, hiring him violated the Hickory County maxim of taking care of their own first. After talking up the letter among themselves, nearly all of Central's faculty members signed on. This was a critical moment - it marked one of the few near consensus decisions that they had made as a faculty in recent memory.

The outcome of the letter could not have been more opposite of what the authors had intended. Instead of freeing the teachers from the burden of participatory decision-making, it brought the state into an even closer proximity to oversee and participate in school decisions. The definitive answer back from the state was that once a faculty had voted for SBCs, they could not undo it. The only exception was if they exceeded their

Accountability Threshold; in August, 1994, Central was a long way from achieving that. Furious, a minority of teachers vowed that they would use other means to undermine Mr. Newmann's leadership. They would not participate in anything related to the SBC, nor would they uphold SBC policies. If they could not lead to its *de jure* dismantling, they would contribute to its *de facto* demise.

SBC Committees

In KERA, site-based decision-making is supported through subcommittees which addressed special topics. These various committees provided the impetus for generating discourse about whose interests should be represented as well as provided a vehicle for expressing those interests. Mr. Newmann was instrumental in reactivating the committee structure that supported the SBC. Proposals did not go to the SBC before being generated or refined by a subcommittee and/or the faculty at the faculty meetings.

On the November Faculty Survey I teachers and staff were asked, "What is the most beneficial change from last year?" and "To what do you attribute this success?" Decision-making and goal-setting structures were mentioned as the second most important category of beneficial changes. Respondents noted that "things are more structured" and that they have been "focusing on and defining our missions and goals at C.H.S." These included, but were not limited to "more structured plans to comply to KERA."

Most of the change was attributed to "the organization of committees and the fact that the committees are meeting and working and reporting back to faculty." "More faculty meetings" and "teacher participation in committees" were a start. But not all were convinced that the meetings in and of themselves were enough. As one respondent noted, there was "nothing [that] has really made a difference. There have been a lot of meetings, rules, and committees, but not a lot done." As another respondent wrote, the key is "to make the committees real (not just written as a mere formality) and to get them to work and come up with a useful program to improve our school."

On the list of Central High SBC Committee membership that was handed out to all faculty, Mr. Newmann thanked volunteers "for all your conscious efforts as you serve on various committees. These committees help form the basis for policy making and decision making process to include all the stakeholders. Keep up the good work!" Nearly all of the teachers were listed as being on one or more committees. However, some were conspicuously absent from any list. Their absence did not impede the process, however, as they would likely never have participated in any case.

Central's SBC committees were: Curriculum, Discipline, Finance, Transformation Plan, Tech Prep, Extended School Services (tutoring), Professional Development, School-Community Relations, and Attendance. Membership ranged from 5 (Finance and ESS) to 14 (Curriculum and Attendance). At the beginning, only School-Community Relations and Attendance had any parent or community member membership. However, over the course of the year the dozen or so members of he nearly defunct PTA were able to encourage a few more parents to become involved. However, Central staff were unused to making meetings accessible for parents and scheduled them at times that made it difficult for working parents to come. Noting that his faculty was neither used to or informed as to how to provide real opportunities for parents, Mr. Newmann issued the note:

> When planning committee meetings please remember to schedule meetings at a time when all stakeholders can be present (After regular work hours for parents.) Be sure to follow open meetings laws and have meetings posted in the newspaper the week prior to the meeting.

In this the local newspaper was usually a partner, although numerous times meeting notices fell to the side or were buried in an obscure section of the paper apart from other articles about the schools.

The case of the Transformation Committee provides a look into the baggage that committee members brought to the meetings. Because of Central's KIRIS scores, they were required to write a "Transformation Plan" that detailed the status and then targeted problems of their school. It required compiling data and getting each department, committee, and special program to complete a section of the report. The previous year a small group of three teachers and staff had thrown one together. Their greatest accomplishment was to get the faculty to approve a school mission statement and teachers were not about to debate the matter again. It read:

> The faculty and parents of Hickory County Central High School accept the responsibility to enable each student to become productive, well-rounded individual capable of making worthy contributions to society.

However, the Plan was in such disarray that it remained too incomplete to file. School personnel were also not motivated to comply with the requirement and submit it because they saw it as a tedious task required by representatives who only held their jobs because of an unsolicited Reform Act. They did not see it as an opportunity to do serious long-term planning on problems that mattered most to them.

But in the 1994-1995 year, especially with the threat of a state investigation, Mr. Newmann and the other administrators were determined that this year their school would file the required document. In this effort they were aided by the brand new master disk that made available to schools a template word processing document with which to create a model Transformation Plan.

Numerous setbacks marked the production of the Transformation Plan. Of the nine teachers assigned to or who selected the committee, only two were regular participants in the meetings. Both had a planning period the same hour, so they met then. One came when she could, but as a teacher of fine arts, she also had to share her time with all of the elementary schools in the district. Four never came, two came occasionally, but did not share a common free hour with the core group. Only one person had any computer skills to speak of, and no one took to working with the master disk. None had been involved with the failed attempt to write a Plan the previous year; all those who had been involved refused to put in the time again. The core teachers waited until Newmann called them to meet and seldom took the initiative to set up a meeting until early Spring, a just months before it was due.

Although Mr. Newmann introduced the Transformation Plan as something that could drive all of the other committee's priorities and problem solving, the Plan itself was seen as something required by the state that had to be done for external readers. As a result, there was little motivation to try to encourage peers to complete their sections, and little to hold over their heads if their (discipline, professional development) committee did not finish the charts completely. Persistent requests for sections at faculty meetings and personal follow through did finally result in most of the sections being completed.

In the process, committees did use these required documents to do their own strategic planning. What were the problems that the Tech Prep group wanted to solve? What resources did they have? What would be a reasonable measure of success? How would they measure this success? For those who took the requirement as a justification to engage in reflection, these questions helped them make progress in their own areas.

In the process of discussing the Transformation Plan charts and in doing their own initiatives, those who took part in the committees found that they had a stake in the policies and practices that they suggested. The committees offered more people the opportunity to propose new rules, devise incentives, distribute school instructional funds, etc. Now they had the opportunity to actually have some say in what was going on. They had a stake in whether the policies were sound or not and if they would be followed, for these were their choices not the decrees of a benevolent dictator.

However, the process of accepting that the SBC committee meetings were their spaces was not a simple one. Teachers hesitated to start meetings without Mr. Newmann's presence. Although he did not set or dominate the schedule, teachers felt that as their instructional leader, and as a teacher already versed in the SBC structure from his previous position, he should be in charge. If he was late (or had no intention of coming) they hesitated to start. This caused him a great deal of frustration, as he did not anticipate the anxiety that his faculty would have when asked to express their opinions or suggest policies for the school. They were not used to being asked for their views, in fact most of the veteran Central teachers had become quite adept at not expressing their opinions in public spaces (although they were accomplished in using the alternative spaces discussed later). But in these smaller groups, over the course of the fall and winter, teachers became less wary of sharing information, offering ideas, and critiquing previous administrations' approaches.

The Faculty Survey I revealed the extent to which teachers felt that simply being listened to was a major change. They noted "more communication between staff/teachers" and "more open communication." These were attributed to a "change in principals," the "new administration and [veteran vice principal] Mr. Harris," an "administration willing to listen and act," and to "effective and caring leadership from our principals." Those faculty and staff who had become stakeholders through the committees valued the "openness of the principals to our ideas," the:

> acceptance of new ideas - [the] desire to learn what is going on in education reform and implement KERA at CHS. More teacher participation in committees. More requests for teacher input.

and the "desire of administration to include teachers in decision-making process." A further respondent elaborated on this category:

> The most beneficial change from last year is the administration. There is a more caring, responsive, and professional attitude in the front office. The lines of communication have been opened and progress is continuously being made. This is extremely evident. Instead of everyone headed in difference directions with no realistic goals in mind we are forging ahead together with our eyes on the BIG PICTURE! I attribute this success to our Site Base Council receiving training in the principal hiring process and having the fortitude to make the rightdecisions despite attempted political influence.

Many staff and faculty respondents felt that a side result was a change in the overall atmosphere. One person wrote:

> our most beneficial change has been the overall atmosphere of our school. In years past, we were very bogged down by manipulation, innuendoes, and controversy. At least two of these factors have improved this year. However, we are still knee-deep in controversy. I attribute the beneficial changes to our administrative staff turn over. Now instead of just one competent principal, we have three !!!

However, another respondent mirrored the heightened sense of uncertainty that accompanied this process. He wrote, " I see no changes except for the faculty frustrations. We are be[gin]ing to overload circuits." Although most people wrote down at least one beneficial change, a significant minority expressed frustration. Many did not see any real change, or saw the inclusion of more stakeholders in the process of reform as evidence of the decay of "real," that is, strong, decisive, and authoritarian leadership. As these respondents wrote; "I do not see much change from last year as far as the student are concerned" and "Nothing. We're de evolving."

Opportunities to Become Involved

As the opportunities to become involved multiplied, so did the reasons for divisions between teachers and staff. The Faculty Survey I revealed interesting differences between those who had become stakeholders in the process of developing reforms and those who consciously resisted being part of these new representation structures. It is interesting to look at the ways in which they described themselves and one another.

In Faculty Survey I they were asked if they felt "that all faculty members have sufficient opportunity to participate in decision-making." They were also asked to answer the follow-up questions: "Is everyone's opinion valued?" "Are all people involved who wish to be?" and "What is holding back those who are not fully engaged?"

More than three times as many people answered "Yes" to most or all of the first three questions as answered "No." Of those answering all four questions, and answering "Yes" to the first, almost one-fourth stated "no," "don't know," or not "necessarily" to the second. A similar proportion, and usually the same people, answered "maybe not" or "probably not" to the third question. However, most of the people who felt that all have sufficient opportunity to participate also believed that everyone's opinion was valued and that everyone who wishes to be is involved. In contrast, all of the people who responded "no" to the first question and answered all four questions directly also gave a "no," or even a "Hell no!" for each subsequent question.

Not surprisingly, the reasons given that hold back those who were not fully engaged differed significantly between these two camps. " 'No' group" respondents blamed inaccessible and inequitable decision-making structures and bodies for the break down. "Some of the faculty is left out in the decision-making progress," wrote one person, and "when input is allowed, it is ultimately ignored" added another. "I feel like decisions are made even before we voice our concerns" echoed another respondent. Concern that "only certain people" have influence was voiced, and the complaint that there is "too much power struggle between teachers - seemingly administrators favor certain teachers upstairs." This "fear and mistrust of administration 'favorites'" contributed to the feeling that one respondent expressed:

> I believe that it is more political than ever before. The only difference is, the players have changed. People who wish to be involved, but have opinions that differ from the opinions of the people in power are afraid for their jobs.

Another added that "the wish is not to 'rock-the-boat.' Our faculty as a whole is too judgmental."

The "Site Base Council" was also implicated in a couple of responses. "We as a faculty seem to be in the dark on major site base decisions" wrote one respondent. Another commented, "SBDM is the worst political machine ever invented. It out classes the old board of ed[ucation] system 5-1."

On the other hand, the " 'Yes' group" blamed disengaged members themselves for their non-involvement. "If anyone is held back, I believe it's their own choice" was a common sentiment. Non-participants were deemed "apathetic toward the success of C. H. S." Other respondents felt that "those who are not [involved] hold back due to the lack of effort on their part." It's "because they are not committed individuals" wrote another.

These personal "attitudes" were coupled with interactions with other people and structural issues in determining the final level of involvement. Thus, six main reasons emerged for non-involvement; lack of interest, time constraints, lack of desire to change, being unaccustomed to being asked for input, fear of reprisal, and non-consideration of their input. These were often seen as being interrelated. For, as others noted, even for those who are interested or who might be interested, "time limitations" may make it "nearly impossible to become fully involved in anything additional." "Some individual[s] don't care and don't want [to be] involved because of the extra work" one respondent added. However, a couple of people questioned whether sufficient opportunity and invitation had been extended to all, writing that they "may not have been asked." In a context in which faculty were used to being silenced, they needed explicit invitation and then ongoing encouragement to stay involved.

"I'm not sure," wrote one person, "but intolerance to change (closed mindedness) may be the rest of the problem." Those who are "not fully engaged [need] to get with the program and [be] willing to change." Many respondents acknowledged that the process of becoming stakeholders was a very personally difficult thing: "The word change is holding all of us back to a certain degree, as we are all fear-ful of the unknown." However, one respondent wrote that this is only an excuse and that:

> faculty and administration members who are not fully engaged seem to be those that have a personal ax to grind - [they] do not want to change because of what might be required to them.

Those who had taken active roles on the SBC and SBC Committees resented the fact that more than half of their peers took a minimal or no role in the new structures.

The fact that there had been a concern for greater faculty (and staff) involvement that year may have been, in itself, an obstacle to overcome.

> Not all faculty members feel the need to get involved. In years past faculty members have sometimes had no say-so in important decisions. This has caused an evasiveness on the part of our faculty. Regardless, however, of who is in the office there are some who feel that their opinions mean little; so they do nothing to benefit Knox Central in return.

Another wrote:

> I don't know if everyone's opinion is valued nor if all who want to be, are. However, if there are some it may be because they are not use[d] to be asked their opinions or may be reluctant to express opinions due to fear of ridicule (or back stabbing).

Intra-faculty "intimidation" and censure exists, according to one respondent, "within the department. I think some of our problems could be worked out with a little more communication. Some teachers feel that their voice is not heard."

Many of the respondents in this group did express similar concerns as those in the "No" group in their observations that people who are not involved may be concerned with rejection by peers and/or administrators. Respondents felt that non-involved people believed that "their opinion doesn't count" or that "not everyone's opinion is valued by certain people." They may be "intimidated by those in charge," but, as one person wrote, they also face censure by other teachers and staff. "The administration seem to value our opinions," wrote one person, "but we are so severely judged and shunned by other teachers for our professional opinions. This is an impedus [impediment]." While teachers recognized that they could be their peer's greatest course of anxiety, few mentioned anywhere in the survey any suggestions for ending the traditional practices of gossip, innuendo, ridicule, and criticism that perpetuated their colleagues' fears.

However, a couple of responses harkened back to the practice of blaming those higher up for their problems. Their colleagues cautioned against taking nay-sayers' complaints too seriously. "Our faculty doesn't always want a voice until decisions are made and they don't agree with them. Then they say they didn't have a part in making those decisions" stated one person. "Some people would rather complain."

Despite the division, several respondents with "Yes" answers to the first questions felt that "those that don't make decisions should get involved in the process." Another located responsibility with the leadership of the school; "administration needs to make decisions and hold everyone accountable for implementing change, whether it be teaching, methods, or attitude."

Defending Our Interests

Not surprisingly, one of the most threatening aspects of KERA is the parent teacher site-based councils. Expanding the official decision-making body to five people instead of one principal or one superintendent challenges the exclusive power of these positions. Those who had been well-connected to those in the few positions of authority had vested interests in maintaining these lifelines to power. Ties of professional alliance and family connected them to their benefactors. While these interests might not be readily apparent to state or external investigators, these barely submerged factors were powerful indeed.

"Why do some people fight education reform?" asked a long-time educator in a private interview. She continued:

> It is the people who benefit from how things are now. It's an unspoken thing. [It's the belief that] as long as we can keep them poor and ignorant, then we can manipulate them. People don't say it out loud, and I don't hear it in public, but why would this situation last so long if it's not helping some people?

She noted that some educators had remained in their positions at Central and in the district long after slues of complaints about their performance, sexual abuse of students, misuse of funds, etc. had made their rounds through the communities. But these teachers and staff remained in their positions, seemingly impervious to removal because they were related to a district administrator or board member, they fact that they had tenure, or whom they were allied with in the central office. Few community members wanted to brave bringing formal charges; those who had done so in the recent past were, as "common knowledge" in the country stores asserted, cut sweet deals to remain silent or they and/or their children were harassed into dropping their claims. To the average person, the schools seemed to be among the least safe of places to challenge long-standing hierarchies of privilege and connection.

Professional and Family Ties

Those who had a stake in maintaining the status quo lived within multiple, overlapping circles of influence. Their families of origin and marriage, their professional, business and social peers and employers all could well take an interest if someone seemed to be "creating problems" for them and theirs. The paradox of this situation was that while those in the inner circles were buffered from outside challengers, they were also very prone to censure and scrutiny by others in the innermost circles.

For problems in the schools often meant problems in any number of closely related realms. The degree to which professionals, both elected and otherwise, were tied to the superintendent, were illustrated in a caricature entitled "The Royal Puppet Show of Hickory County" (See Figure 3). It was anonymously circulated under a previous superintendent's reign. This cartoon remains a source of amusement and chagrin. At the time that it was circulated no one officially claimed it, although the probable artist was generally decided upon by popular opinion. A community member who had kept a copy passed it on, his admiration of the artist's chutzpah evident.

In it, elected county officials were depicted as: complicit in the funneling of funds away from the schools; taking plumb salaries in exchange for looking the other way; being willing to do whatever the superintendent wanted, including raising taxes or assessing some people's at lower levels; and asking for favors that they had earned by faithfully serving the superintendent or one of his predecessors. Along the sides were depictions of the High Speed Rumor Mill that the Superintendent supposedly had patented and sources of additional funds and power that the superintendent was shown to be trying to get his hands on. Teachers were also seen by the author to be complicit in - of resentful of - this manipulation of power also; they went along with "suggestions" for how they should vote in school board and political office elections. Thus on the bottom stands a nearsighted, elderly female teacher with the thought bubble, "When I retire I'll vote the way I want!"

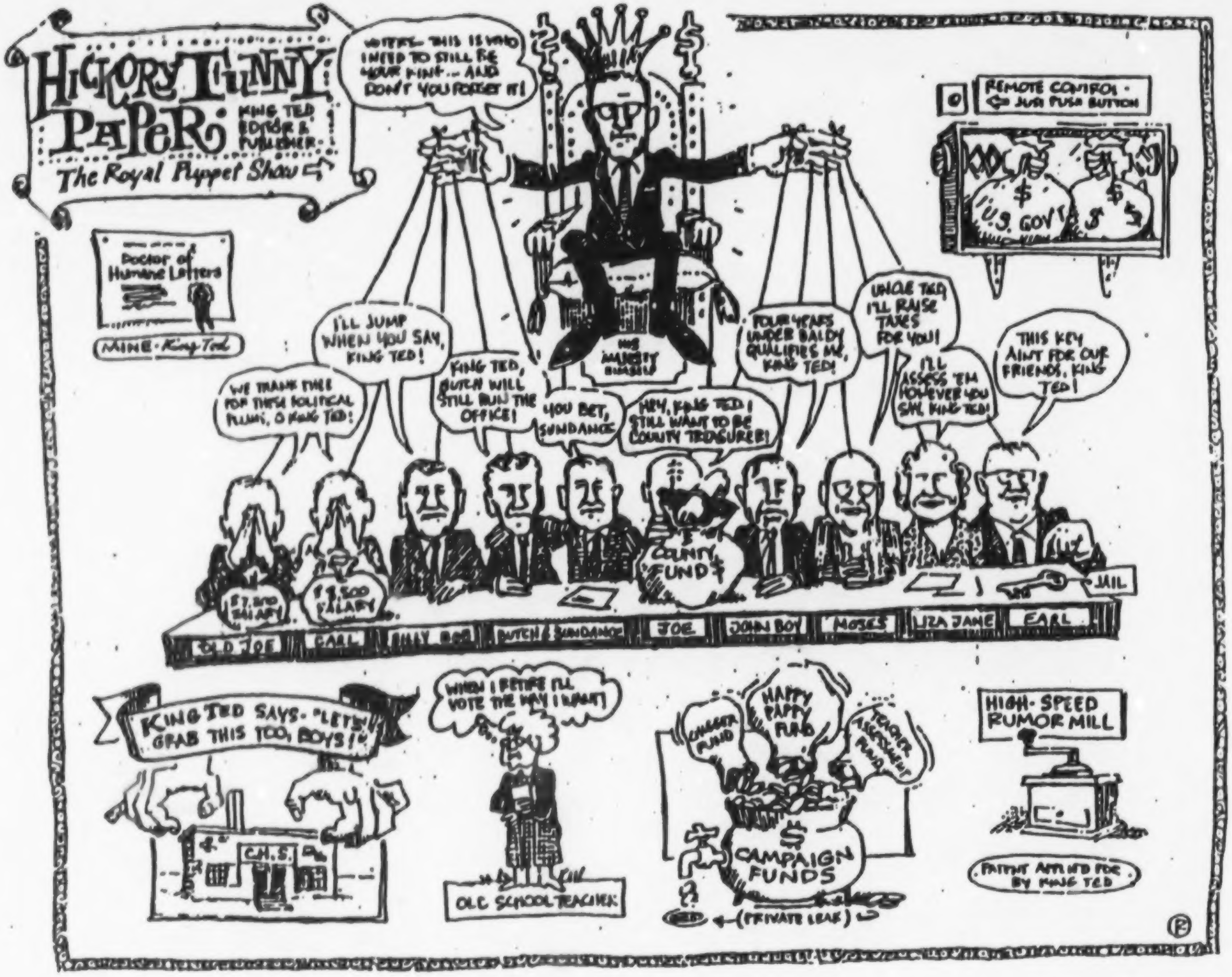
HICKORY TUNNY PAPER
KING TED EDITOR & PUBLISHER
The Royal Puppet Show
VOTERS— THIS IS WHO I NEED TO STILL BE YOUR KING... AND DON'T YOU FORGET IT!
Doctor of Humane Letters
MINE - King Ted
REMOTE CONTROL - JUST PUSH BUTTON
U.S. GOV'T
$
HIS MAJESTY HIMSELF
WE THANK THEE FOR THESE POLITICAL PLUMS, O KING TED!
I'LL JUMP WHEN YOU SAY, KING TED!
KING TED, DUTCH WILL STILL RUN THE OFFICE!
YOU BET, SUNDANCE
HEY, KING TED I STILL WANT TO BE COUNTY TREASURER!
FOUR YEARS UNDER BALDY QUALIFIES ME, KING TED!
UNCLE TED I'LL RAISE TAXES FOR YOU!
I'LL ASSESS 'EM HOWEVER YOU SAY, KING TED!
THIS KEY AINT FOR OUR FRIENDS, KING TED!
$7,500 SALARY
$7,500 SALARY
COUNTY FUND$
JAIL
OLD JOE
EARL
BILLY BOB
DUTCH
SUNDANCE
JOE
JOHN BOY
MOSES
LIZA JANE
EARL
KING TED SAYS- "LET'S GRAB THIS TOO, BOYS!"
C.H.S.
WHEN I RETIRE I'LL VOTE THE WAY I WANT!
OLD SCHOOL TEACHER
HAPPY PAPPY FUND
TEACHER RETIREMENT FUND
CAMPAIGN FUNDS
(PRIVATE LEAK)
HIGH-SPEED RUMOR MILL
PATENT APPLIED FOR BY KING TED

Figure 3.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Teachers at Central were united in the belief that a few families extensively influenced the course of events in the county. "Some families feel like they should run everything. Deep in their heart that's why they aren't behind KERA" stated Miss Clearsy. Despite having seen "the way certain cliques run everything" when she was growing up there, she decided that would come back after college and try to make a life for herself. Another woman stated that at age 29 she was already considered to be an "old maid" because she had not yet married. She hoped to find a young man who would appreciate her, and who would want to live in the region. But, she noted with disdain, many of the most eligible young men from the "best" families were already taken. As a member of a family with little social capital, and no direct ties to anyone currently in top office or in a clear line of successorship, she felt that she was decidedly less attractive.

For those who had good working relations with decision-makers and authorities, the clear benefit was that you could anticipate that you and yours would be taken care of. Mr. Hamilton talked about what he valued in his home town:

> [They] knew that someone else would look out for their kid - people are more relaxed. People want to know that others are concerned with their kids, that people care, that there's that "I care" attitude with teachers or anyone else, that you feel comfortable with your children going to school there and for your selves that everything will be OK there.

However, he added, his tone shifting to a more reflective pitch, "That's bad in a way because sometimes you're too comfortable. . . " He talked about the "good old boy system" in Hickory County. But, he noted, the need to be tied in to those who had power had its good and bad sides:

> People feel appreciated and know *their* kids getting a good education. There's a local attitude of trust. But some people aren't trust worthy and they're just hired because of who they are. It's a disgrace - a disgrace!- that some people don't do their job. A kid loses a whole year of learning just because his teacher had a friend who knew a friend who knew the superintendent . . .

Even this teacher, who was arguably among the county;'s social elite, acknowledge that the practice of looking out for their own could have negative effects.

Many teachers talked openly about the ties and obligations that they supposed their leaders had built up in order to be in the positions they were in. People were depicted as seeking to create win-win situations in which as many in the inner circle won as possible. Thus when elected to top offices, a person did not just make sure relatives were taken care of, but also that key members of the "opposition's" family were provided for. For when the tables were turned, that was the way to be sure that your two families were still the ones who shared the most advantageous positions.

The remarkable thing about "politics" in Hickory County was not the extent to which such relationships were hidden, but the frequency with which they were openly discussed. In the teachers' lounge, at the cooks' table in the cafeteria, and in the bus garage, Central staff told tale after tale about how they just "knew" a particular person would benefit from a certain district policy. They "knew" that so-and-so's father-in-law had had a say in a particular program decision. They "knew" why a specific young person had been hired over another. Even if these stories could not be proven - particularly if they could not be proven - that only served as further proof that clandestine, powerful, unchallengeable forces were most certainly at work.

Those who had ties to those in charge were seen as acting quite rationally and reasonably when they pulled strings to get something to happen. In a context of uncertain levels of resources and few really profitable jobs after the demise of the coal industry in the county, staff members thought it prudent for those who were able to cultivate what connections they could. Like students preparing to go into a fight, adults were encouraged to know who would support them in a faculty meeting, SBC committee, or faculty lounge argument. They needed to know that there would be others who had a vested interest in representing their common interests even in the other person's absence. They needed to know that others needed them because of who they were and who they knew, not just because of some anonymous attributes. In this rural county people prized being known to others as a person, not a number.

Teachers seemed to have a stake in perpetuating these stories about their leaders; as long as a select few seemed to have all the control, even site based councils would be powerless to challenge them. Therefore, they reasoned, there was little reason to risk becoming involved - superficial public decision-making bodies still had to get their decisions past those superintendents and board members who had the ultimate stamp of approval. And, as teachers found when the issue came up of becoming a Smoke Free School, there were some real advantages of maintaining the face to face personal negotiations with power holders rather than working through democratic structures that called for consensus or even a majority vote.

Asserting Autonomy

"Limits, we don't need no stinkin limits!" declared a T-shirt that was popular among Central students. This slogan tells much about many students' - and teachers' -

attitudes about reforms that threatened to change the status quo at their school. They were used to doing their own thing in the hallways, in the student parking lot, and behind the school. Things were just fine - they did not have a problem. They were not about to simply change because someone or some far-off legislature mandated otherwise.

The most important example of faculty and staff member's assertion of their autonomy was the way they handled a SBC policy that banned smoking on school grounds. Proposed so that the school would be in compliance with the federal Clean Air Act, the faculty had initially supported the decision. A teacher who was present described what happened then:

> The majority wanted to have a smoke free schools and be in compliance with the Clean Air Act. Site-based passed it 4-3. But people said 'No' [once they realized it also applied to teachers] and got a petition to sign it and most did -- even the people who wanted the smoke-free. I wonder if they knew what they were signing? The superintendent overruled it.

The outcome was that students were banned from smoking on school grounds, but faculty, janitors, and bus drivers were to be allowed to smoke anyway. "It's pitted people against people!" declared an administrator.

Students were very vocal about what this outcome meant to them. The students voiced their concerns, because, as Miriam wrote, "the changes are not just happening to the faculty and staff it's happening to all the students at Central." The students clearly saw the contradictions in their teachers' model of following the rules. Melissa wrote that this caused a problem:

> Let's look at the smoking issue for example. Shure it's a nasty habit but that's exactly the reason why people continue to smoke at school. The key word in that statement was HABIT. People are addicted to cigarettes and if they smoke at home how can you expect them not to smoke at school. When this rule was passed I think it clearly stated that neither faculty nor students are aloud to smoke at or on school grounds. How can you enforce a rule that the faculty even ignores, and I think the statement, "Do as I say and not as I do" is not an excuse.

Amy explained that this outcome exemplified the discipline problems at the school. She attributed inconsistencies to:

> the techique the principals and the facuilty take upon the students. You place a Disciplion Code here at the school to try and help us, bit yet I never see it used, You say No Smoking aloud on school campus, but still I see people everyday smoking in the bathrooms, out side, in the hallways, and even in the classrooms. I can't see way the teachers and you can't deal with this.

She continued that it was unfair for students to bear the burden of enforcement when teachers walked away from their responsibilities:

> I know you think we the students should tell on thouse who do it, but you must understand we can not tell on someone, because then that would cause another problem.

Students saw their teachers' subsequent successful appeal to the superintendent to exempt them from the smoking ban, as proof that one did not have to abide by rules that one did not agree with. T.J. commented:

> I don't think that [the rule] can be enforced if most all of the faculty still smokes on campus. You can't expect the students to stop if the faculty does it especially where you can see them.

Concurred Krista:

> You say that students and faculting are not allowed to smoke, but at any time that you walk down the hall by the janitors' room or the teachers' loung you can smell smoke. Why is it fair to go back on your word and let them and not the students?

The fact that students have to deal with faculty smoking can be more than an inconvenience for some. Dave commented:

> There may be a student that may have to be near that teacher and them smoking may cause them to lose their concentration because of the smoke they're inhailing. Also there may be student that is allergic to the smoke and have to come in contact with a teacher that has a habit of smoking and they come down with an illness caused by your nonsmoking rule enforced teacher.

Students wanted the same clemency that their teachers enjoyed from following rules that they had initially agreed to but then decided they did not like.

Melissa shared the opinion of most of the smoking students that the SBC ought to represent their interests by building a covered designated smoking area. She wrote, "Shure you might lose a little money from the government but you'll have a whole lot less rebelious pranks pulled." This except reveals many commonly held ideas about local enforcement of rules. First, the decision to actually uphold the federally mandated Clean Air Act in a tobacco-producing county is not an easy one to make. Second, the principal, as the representative of the school, is supposed to stand against external authorities and represent the best interests of the school community, staff and students, which most interpreted as allowing them to do what they were already doing, smoking. His siding with people "who don't know what it is like here," was seen as a weakness.

Parent observers of this "travesty" did not like what their young people were learning from their teachers. Mrs. Collins commented:

> The students see if the teachers, faculty don't agree. Students hear 'em talk in the background. If rules are set down and the teachers get around it the kids know. Kids should see you're supposed to go by the rules and not go against them.

When making decisions, Mr. Collins added that faculty should, "put your student first and ask 'Is it good for a child to smoke?' and if not, then disallow it." Mr. Briggs, another father standing with them in the foyer at the bank wanted to know more about how different interests were actually represented in decisions:

> Who determines what's in the children's best interest? Maybe with health people wouldn't disagree, but with philosophy. . .? What [we need to write] is a policy that people can read, that is clear, that people won't read into it. Do we even have a mission statement?

These parents were worried that the smoking rule would set a dangerous precedent. They were appalled that teachers would do one thing through SBC and then undo it. The result seemed to be going backwards instead of making progress, "Teachers will vote one way and then by the end of the meeting they'll vote to undo it." Mr. Collins added:

> There's no unity - it's what that group or this group wants, not what's best for kids. But the kids should come first. They should be working as a group for the kids - and it takes them all working together!

But that small group of parents left the discussion worried that Central faculty would continue to have a hard time agreeing on and writing out rules.

Codifying the Rules

Exacerbating the tendency for faculty and students to act in their own interests regardless of formal policies was he shared belief that by formalizing those same policies the authors had raised the stakes. By writing out formal rules, the authors had, in essence, issued a challenge. Some staff were quick to take it up; their young apprentices followed close behind.

The most prominent set of incidences were those that were sparked by the passage of a new discipline code. However, the SBC authors did not intend for greater controversy to be the result of the new code. In fact, they had proposed the written rules and set penalties for infractions as a way of mediating the vast differences in sanctions that different students received.

Some teachers did feel that the code did help somewhat. On the faculty Survey I teachers and staff were asked what the most beneficial change from the previous year had been. By far the most comments were about discipline. "Better discipline," was mentioned by several respondents as contributing to a better "student attitude toward learning," "an increase in positive student behavior," and "has helped maintain some discipline and stability for the students." Respondents specifically noted that "the placement of 'rules' and 'policies,'" had helped them. The "written discipline code" or "set rules" were important in and of themselves, and provided clear guidelines for responding to misbehavior. One person pointed out under "what has helped me as a teacher:"

> I think the most beneficial change from last year is the discipline code, where teachers can report students who have misbehaved in class three times. I feel like the students think before acting because of the code.

They felt that the passage of the code represented "administration and teacher cooperation and integration of a policy and enforcement," and were glad to compliment "an improved discipline committee." These respondents were pleased that the "site-base council [was] finally being allowed to do their job." But not all of their peers agreed that the code had actually helped discipline.

Part of the problem was that students separated the discipline code from the concept of discipline and focused on the former at the expense of the latter. In interviews, students saw "discipline" as being a set of rules rather than a kind of civil, respectful behavior. For them, creating "discipline," amounted to establishing a set of rules.

"Some of these are good rules that we should have had a long time ago," wrote Gregg, pointing to sanctions for skipping class, fighting, and vandalism. However, for many more students, the feeling was that they had settled into an acceptable rhythm, in which students enjoyed a great deal of autonomy. "Some of the thing's you have changed don't need changed, " remarked Melissa.

Many upper-class students who had been used to the previous administrators' hands-off approach to rules felt that the establishment of rules was in and of itself a problem. The new code did not suit them. Many students and teachers saw Mr. Newmann and the SBC as unnecessarily causing problems for them. Sean asked, "Is there really a need to go to the extreme with such small problems? thay are only as big as you make them." His classmate Rita's comment reflects the commonly held belief that some things, e.g. the dress code and fights, that in previous years were allowed to pass, now became a problem. "We never really had this problem before you came," she wrote in her letter to Mr. Newmann.

One of the most popular items of clothing for boys to wear was shirts with athletic teams, logos, and or players on them. The pictures are usually coupled with slogans that assert a cocky, swaggering attitude toward conflicts, extol the wearer or character's prowess or superiority, or declare that one should, "Fear Nothing." Students felt that their behavior need not both anyone. One of these shirts answered adults' charge that the students have an inappropriate demeanor, countering proudly, "I don't have an attitude problem, I have an attitude."

Students were particularly outspoken against new dress codes that forbid clothes with vulgar, demeaning, or overtly suggestive sayings on them. Teens felt that the rules were superficial and paternalistic, forbidding them to repeat things that they regularly heard at home, in the media, and from instructors and coaches. In addition, students noted it put too much emphasis on small things, when there were much larger problems. Rachel criticized what she saw as trying to clean up Central's image without addressing the underlying issues:

> I think that some of the problems that we are having in school is due to the fact that the school is worried about the kinds of clothes people are wearing instead of what people are doing. It is for what the school looks like to the people out side of the school and the area. When behind every corner something is going on not being talked about.

These students felt that Mr. Newmann and the SBC were just trying to clean up Central's tarnished image for external observers while still letting those who knew better suffer. In their view, an emphasis on writing and defending the integrity of a set of words was really skirting the underlying issues.

The written rules were taken as an explicit challenge by many at Central. Those who had a stake in maintaining their autonomy despite majority vote actively fought back against what they saw a legal means of constraining them. This applied equally to SBC regulations as to KERA mandates.

Most adult stakeholders at Central agreed with their colleague's assertion that mandates were a problem. "You can' t make people change. You can't mandate change!" stated Mr. Walter. Recognizing that KERA directly mandates certain changes (such as site-based decision-making) he added in a tone of voice that pretended he was confiding a secret that both of us already knew, "Yeah, but it's like everything else here - it's *not enforced*." He noted the essential dilemma when proposing change in Hickory County, "You can't make people *do* anything. Maybe a few will get on board, but if you *make* 'em, they'll resist, they'll just dig in deeper."

A colleague, Mr. Crawford, added that he felt that KERA mandates had only made the confrontations worse:

> We've never had good morale here, not from teachers or with sports. Not back as far as I can remember, and I was a student here at Central in the 1970s. But now, it's *never* been this low. It's all these changes - too much forced on us.

He added that having made formal rules was his new principal's fatal flaw.

> Newmann made people do things, he came in and told people what to do and people retaliated. Now I'm a man who if I don't like you I'll tell you to your face, but a lot of people aren't like that. They'll strike back.

In this Mr. Crawford was hinting that while some faculty might not actively resist or retaliate, they would find covert means of doing so.

Students guided on their teachers and reported that it seemed that the new rules could not be adequately enforced. Chasity, a junior, was upset at being told what to do when in high school. Her words mirrored those of some of her teachers:

> There is just too much discipline in this school. I have never been handed a sheet of rules to tell me what I can and can't do here at school. . . The more you try and tell us not to do something, the more we are going to do it.

While some teachers took their resistance underground, students were more likely to retaliate more directly. Christi justified her truancy, with the comment, "sometimes the teachers can be too strict, and this makes the students do things they normally may not have done." Brian, a quiet scholar with a wry sense of humor and an gift for observation wrote in his letter to the principal:

> I used to enjoy the freedom this school gave me, but now since Mr. Newmann has come into the picture it's more we under a dictatorship. I'm sorry if I seem out of line I just want to speak my mind and that's something that you and Newmann can't take away from me. What I'm really wanting to say is the rules you all have made for me and the other students doesn't change anything, it doesn't make the troublemakers stop making trouble. . . Why makes rules that aren't going to do any good anyway? The students are now really starting to feel like prisoners and just like prisoners, the students are going to try to escape. So it don't do any good to change something that was fine in the first place. What I'm saying is the students are going to find a way to adjust to the new rules and find ways to beat them. You can't beat the students if they don't want you to beat them. . . [you should] leave everything alone as it is now and everybody will forget the changes before and learn to live with them.

Others concurred that students were being put in a position where they felt like all they could do to be heard was to rebel. Autumn wrote:

> The kids aren't allowed to smoke at school so they burn the restrooms. They are not allowed to wear certain kinds of clothing but they do it anyways. They are not allowed to cross the white lines painted on certain parts of the school grounds so they don't come to school at all, they lay out.

Other student s offered more dire assessments of the intensifying conflict. Another student warned that the principal was "playing with fire." Dave, a student leader, warned in his letter:

> I think from the word in the halls is that the only reason that the students are causing so much trouble is because of the burden that you have placed upon them with your rules. I think that in store for you to have a successful reign as HEAD PRINCEPAL you need to slack off of the rules or you may have an L.A. riot on you hands or if your lucky you may get off the hook with the name of Central High School being mentioned on [regional radio station] with much larger schools as [two inner city schools] of having troubles in our school system. I'm only telling you the truth for your own well being. So if you don't want a flat out riot on your hands you may decide to call off the big dogs and slack off on the rules . . . think, is this disciplinary code really worth the trouble??!!

In a less confrontational ending to the letter Dave added, "I don't know if I've even put a dint in your armor but I thought that these things had to brought in front of your face and not said behind your back."

The result of a very visible, yet well-connected minority of students and teachers who openly flaunted their ability to defy the new discipline code was that others were pressured to join them or look the other way. T.J. was disturbed by what he saw a growing tendency for his teachers and principals to avoid the magnitude of the problem by looking the other way:

> The fact is that their is alot of different things going on at this school there are drugs being sold at school every time you turn around you hear of someone smoking pot or see someone smoking it. I know that it is not that hard to find out who's doing it. It is being put away in a small corner and everyone goes on about their day as if there was nothing going on. It is a fact that is here and every time you or someone else pretends not to notice the problems gets larger. Students are seeing how much they can get away with and as you close your eyes to the problems there going to get worse.

Students weren't the only ones who were bothered by the lack of consistency or cohesion among Central's educators. Faculty noted on Survey I that rules without follow-through are counterproductive. As one respondent warned, "We now have more rules that are not enforced. I can't think of any [beneficial changes]." Teachers noted that some of their colleagues and students flaunted their abilities to get around the rules. Greater "consistency" and holding "everyone accountable for following policies, rules, and suggestions" were mentioned by numerous respondents as the key to success. "Teachers need to implement rules and regulations set by board and site base." However, "all teachers are not cooperating, even as we speak, with all the rules." "All of the faculty needs to participate in hall duty, bathroom duty, etc. and be on time." Respondents saw that providing a quality, challenging environment for education included competence and effort in the classroom as well. One respondent, concerned about this aspect of accountability, wrote that there is a problem with:

> course 'structure' - I've heard many students talk of teachers and how some appear to do very little and require little work. These students have mentioned how they have learned nothing from those teachers. I think that, besides lesson plans, teachers should present to a principal samples of work required from students and be able to defend what they're doing with each class.

Teachers who had become stakeholders in upholding the rules expressed frustration through this anonymous venue that those who were stakeholders in undermining the rules continued to make their job very difficult. Those who enforced the rules seemed like they were causing the students problems and those who created lax classroom environments were doing them a favor. However, even students felt that no structure or substantive assignments made for very boring classes.

In contrast to using written rules, many of the resisters wanted to see change come more slowly and on a personal level. "Being our new principal doesn't mean that you have to come in and change our whole lifestyle," wrote Chasity. Drawing upon his years at Central, Dave, who had been an effective leader, felt inspired to offer the following advice:

> I don't think that you put much thought into you're disciplinary coding when you arrived. I think that if you would have came in and remained with the same code that we had previously and maybe stiffened up on it this may have been a smoother start for you and myself. I think that the reason that you having so much trouble with the students are that they disapprove of the new code and they are rebeling against something that they don't agree with.

Dave drew on the local idea that outside experts were prone to underestimate the importance of working with people rather than decreeing reforms from afar. Mr. Leonard, one of his teachers concurred:

> [You] need to know our ways, how to fit in, how to gain influence (don't rock the boat, know that people can count on you to uphold their piece of the action). Site-based ought to communicate with people versus be a power structure and try to run over people. They're there to build a local machine rather than build local consensus.

He reemphasized that if reforms are to be in the best interest of those who already had found their place in the local system, reformers need to be "one of the boys." He went on to comment:

> personal relations are very important in building moral. Most people are pretty stubborn. They don't change easily and need to know that it won't hurt them.

Mr. Leonard continued, drawing on the pervasive local skepticism for the meaning of diplomas that were not accompanied by common sense about the local culture:

> I don't care how many degrees you got or how smart you think you are. If you don't get into the situation and figure out to make things work in a particular situation it'll not work.

Like many of their peers, neither Dave nor Mr. Leonard wanted any "experts" coming in and telling them what to do.

Even those who were sympathetic to Mr. Newmann's initiation noted that he had overlooked some important people skills. Mrs. Gray noted, "It's all about power and saving face, he doesn't ask, he just goes ahead, he makes blunders with people." Another district administrator talked about how he had learned that he had to show teachers how it was in their best interest to join in reforms. He expounded:

> I think that being in this job has made me less authoritative You get more out of people when they think that it is their way versus your way.

He noted that with SBCs and KERA the game had changed:

> When I went into the job if you're the boss people do what you said - I always did what the boss said - but I learned that if you really want people to do something that it has to be something they want to do. They have to see a purpose in doing it. You can slam all the fists down but it won't work. They have to not buy in and with a lot of our people they have to write the contract - they have to feel that it is something they can live with. I guess that's human nature - I don't know I've not lived outside of these mountains, maybe that's just us quirky people here, I don't know.

Until all had a stake in defining and upholding the discipline code at Central however, it was likely that dissension and disorder would be the order of the day. Hannah wrote that defying the rules had become the thing in the forefront, rather than the discipline they were supposed to inspire. For students, the emphasis on enforcing and codifying the rules had taken needed time and energy away from instruction. As Hannah wrote:

> I have always thought that you come to school to learn. To learn you must be in a comfortable and kind atmosphere. The feeling around here lately is that of a

> reform school. Lately, I do not recognize this school anymore. We are knee high in rules and ankle deep in learning.

In many ways the student and faculty responses to their own discipline code were parallel to the resistance they showed vis-a-vis the new codes of conduct established in KERA. First, Hickory Countians resented the implication that the status quo that they were used to was not good enough. They felt that their new leader and the KERA mandates that he was generally enthusiastic about only aimed to make them different from what they were. Like Mr. Wilkins, who ran a small business and who resented any interference in "his business," especially from the government, they did not want to change just for the sake of being more like the mainstream. He retorted wryly:

> The people who fight education are the people who benefit. And people just don't like change, they just don't. I don't. For example, I'm married to the same woman, go to the same barber, the same restaurant, the same doctor and I'm not about to change. Why change just for the sake of changing?

Others at Central concurred. "Why do we have to change *everything*?!?" hissed three teachers stationed at their posts to patrol for smokers. They were angered by Newmann's disregard for the long-standing tradition of a senior dinner. He cited financial reasons. But, in a bout of annoyance, he also felt that it was a waste of money for a pampered few and over-glorified accomplishments that he saw as falling far short of the KIRIS progress goals that he had hoped for his new charges. Joined by a fourth teacher, the angry group came to consensus, "We just have to be *different* from what we are!" To them this was another signal that what they did and who they were was not good enough, that such decisions mocked what, "little we do have for the kids. This is the very best thing they have all year - table cloths and everything - and now we're supposed to just give it up??!" In utter frustration they continued, "We always have to change from what we are."

Second, educators felt that such mandates violated the norm of working face to face to work out mutually agreeable compromises. They preferred to work things out on a personal basis rather than on the basis of some legal regulations. Hickory Countians took offense when rules were written out for them. Noted Mr. Leonard:

> You have to work with 'em versus over 'em, be a suppressive type administration. Personal relationships are key in any small community, especially probably in the South. Yep, human relations are very important.

They wanted to retain the flexibility and personal nature of negotiations as they were used to them.

"Good Old Boys" and "Loud Mouthed Women"

Gender plays an important role in constructing interest groups. The salience of gender in demarcating potential allies and building coalitions goes far beyond the simple identification of participants as either male or female. Stakeholders draw on gendered concepts of what constitutes someone you can depend on, someone who shares the same set of vested interests, someone you can talk to as an equal. Stakeholders did not shy away from invoking power of gender to reinforce desired actions, charging for example, that "a real man" ought to "have the balls" to resist the state. Or men would call upon the "good old boy" code to make a peer feel guilty for enforcing a mandate above personal considerations for clemency.

These cultural reference points for expected, normal behavior stand out even further when contrasted with the behaviors of someone who transgresses these norms. Women were sharply criticized when they deviated from their traditional, private roles as supporters and teachers and entered the public realm. Instead of being lauded as their male counterparts were, when women tried to join the elite clubs of male administrators and elected officials, they were more likely to be denigrated as "loud mouthed women."

"Good Old Boys"

The label "good-old-boy" was used extensively, both by those who would challenge the men so charged and by those who wear the label as proudly a they might a Shriner's fez. Many of those who adopted this label often prefaced it with the word "just," as in "I'm *just* a good old boy." In using this disclaimer they meant "this is just how I was raised" or "I don't know anything else." They sent the message that whatever the listener might think, the speaker could not be other than he was, nor did he intend to relinquish any of the status he enjoyed as an insider member of this exclusive club.

Just like the disclaimer, "I don't have much education, but. . ." when used by a man who was part of the community elite of elected officials and educational administrators, "I'm just a good old boy. . ." served to reinforce for listeners that his membership in the "club" was anything but innocuous. For good old boys took care of their own first, whether that meant not pursuing a delinquent property tax payer or not including a certain item on the school board's meeting's agenda. While these actions might seem to be simply "doin' what comes natural" they were hardly trivial exercises of power and authority.

A key maxim of a good old boy is not to act better than others. Even a professional man with a solid middle-class lifestyle repeatedly asserted, "I'm a poor boy" and thus asserted that he could share an affinity with his still poor peers. Men who wanted to be well liked were wary of appearing to be too far above the norm, having too large a home, buying too fancy a car. They talked about how it was important to them to not be taken for "above their raisin'," that is, acting like they did not share traits in common with their childhood friends. A young father of a Central student reflected what he liked about one of his own favorite teachers when he attended Central:

> He was 'one of the guys' - like one of us except a good leader. He brought it across, but you didn't know that he was doing it to you."

This father saw that it would be very hard to be a leader and still be "one of the guys." Not many people liked someone who put themselves above others, who acted like an expert who did not need to listen to or spend time with others.

A key aspect of being a good old boy is allowing others to lead their lives without undue interference. As a "country boy," adult men in positions of leadership stated that they valued their independence and did not want to have to impose sanctions on others that would, in turn, restrict their fellows' own autonomy. A civic leader stated that as one of the boys, if a potential conflict emerged, he would "just talk" with others, trying to use a sense of mutual obligation to encourage them not to stir things up. He asserted that, "I'd be the same if'n I were the sheriff. I'd tell them to be *good boys."*

However, the difficulties that arise when his peers do not honor this code of honor is considerable. In fact, long-standing friendships may be in jeopardy if someone is asked to make a choice between a person and a policy. Mr. Richards noted that as a teacher he often felt personal conflicts about how he should react when some of his buddies took advantage of the code. He noted that with good reason:

> Some teachers and people put down a good old boy. A good old boy means that everything is fine, he's a good guy. But when you get down to it some people are not doing their job, but some people aren't under the [micro]scope, the eyeglass. You go about [your business] and pat the other person on the back and don't do a thing to change things, to make things better in the workplace.

Mr. Richards found it very difficult to take action against his peer, but felt that at least in public he had the obligation to not intervene in his friend's choices.

Autonomy and self-determination are hallmarks of manhood. The ability to achieve and retain control over family affairs proves that a man is the head of his household. Likewise, being in authoritative control of one's business, school district, or classroom connotes a similar ability to retain control. Therefore, challenges to local patriarchal authority strike at the very heart of what a man is supposed to be. When these challenges come from highly educated state officials (who would not earn the title Good Old Boy), it only serves to further local elite's desire to reassert the authority of the local elite set of good old boys. When these challenges come from a well-educated, articulate *woman, the* personal insult is even greater. Penney Sanders, who heads the Office of Educational Accountability and is legally vested with the power to investigate and remove administrators, was a frequent target for men who recognized the threat that she posed to their autonomy. Derogatory comments made about this woman included referring to her as "a bitch" and questioning her heterosexuality. In the minds of the male name-callers, she did not defer to their authority as a woman ought to do.

Another element of the code of being a good old boy is not making another person look foolish or ignorant in front of others. Whether smoking and telling tales around the lunch counter in one of the corner groceries, or gathered on the front porch, a true friend will avoid public confrontation. Mr. Evans, a school board member, commented that he really enjoyed living in the mountains because of the "slow livin' " and the relaxing, laid-back style that people had when talking to one another. For him, an important part of maintaining this public peace was acting as a "good old boy." He defined this as:

> you go along with people, whether they are right or wrong. It's surely been a way of life, just the way we growed up. See, many people -- it's easier to agree with something -- will agree if they say something to you, but then say something different to someone else.

Asked to explain the seeming duplicity, he continued:

> People don't want to have to prove their point, [so] you don't disagree with people, say they're lying. Rather you don't say anything to that person, but when you get around -- people'll agree with you, then when they leave it's easier to disagree.

This practice helped to maintain the semblance of harmony and unity that made "easy livin'" possible.

"Loud Mouthed Women"

Many of the same elements of the good old boy code of ethics apply to coalitions between women. They share a similar concern for not acting like they are better than others, finding common interests based on their family and social activities, and not making one another look foolish. However, no such comparable terms to "good old boy" exists, perhaps indicating that there is no publicly-recognized network of influence comparable to male friendship circles. In fact, women as leaders usually only became a topic of conversation when a woman transgressed the rules of appropriately feminine behavior. When she did so, she was often branded a "loud mouthed woman."

While women may have traditionally had strong friendships and kinship relations, these did not tend to be in spaces outside the home and neighborhood. In interviews with female members of the site-based councils, past, present, and newly elected, the women often contrasted the kinds of advocacy/leadership that they were learning with traditional expectations that they not be outspoken in public. Mrs. Lincoln, a veteran teacher, explained, "Traditionally, a woman only left her home to go to school, get married, and go to funerals." Even today, many women and men who had a stake in the success of such representative bodies and the PTA and site-based councils did not feel that women could easily enter public life. Few of those surveyed agreed that "Women are respected as public leaders in this county." Only # percent of faculty, # percent of involved parents, # percent of adult GED students, most of whom were women, and # percent of the sample of freshmen "definitely agreed" or "agreed most of the time."

Until recently, there were few places for professional women to work together outside of the public schools. But even until the last one room school was closed in 1972, they tended to be segregated into isolated and widely dispersed schools. Central, as the county's consolidated high school, provides a forum unparalleled in scope or size in which women could meet and take on positions of leadership and influence. Mrs. Clearsy explained why she thought that it might be at Central where changes in women's roles happened first:

> In the old times, the women were the followers, especially in politics. The old way was to say, 'That's not a woman's place.' Change comes slow here, but education is the place where it'd come. Everyone knows of a legendary woman teacher, and teaching was 'a nice, woman's job,' it's the natural place where people would feel comfortable with women.

She stated that site-based offered a significantly different arena in which women could become leaders:

> It's not a dramatic change yet, but it is another area. Otherwise there was just PTA and that didn't have hardly any influence. PTOs were essentially attendance boosters.

Although the SBC at Central still had to do daily battle with teachers who did not believe that it was a legitimate representative entity, those women who served felt that it al least provided a way for them to exercise their voice and be counted. But even they felt severely constrained to take that newly-emerging voice and assert their right to be heard outside of the school. Other women found the struggle to be taken seriously equally difficult, especially if they did not have the degree, job, education, or husband to give them a sense of respectability and status in the community. "I dream of being politically active," confided a woman in an adult education class, "but the community won't give a woman the chance."

Many of those women who do try to become leaders are severely castigated by their former peers. The woman who had been promoted from Central teacher to principal was introduced to me by a friend of hers with, "This is Mrs. Walker. She was just selected the new vice principal, but she's still one of us." However, quite a few of her female former teaching colleagues resented taking orders from her. They would talk when ever she did at the faculty meetings, they would ignore her orders, they would disparage her in front of other teachers, staff and even students. A misogynistic atmosphere was cultivated so as to undermine her credibility and leadership. In addition to a lead article entitled "Central High Gets New Administrators" the student paper ran a response to their survey question, "How do you feel about our new assistant principal?" The newspaper authors were notoriously bad samplers. At least in this particular issue the survey results were actually prefaced with the remark:

> A few of us from the journalism staff are doing a survey on things that have been happening here at Central. We have asked a few of the students some questions and here are their opinions about what we asked them.

The five comments that they chose to print (along with the name of the student or teacher who gave the opinion) read:

> I guess its OK. It's no big deal. (male student)
>
> I think that it is wrong because when women get in a position like that, they like to take charge too much. (female student)
>
> I don't really know her that good but I guess its OK. (female student)

> I think that it is all right for a woman to be in a higher position but not if it goes to her head. (female student)
>
> I think that it is great! Women see things men don't see. They also have a different point of view. (female teacher)

Resisting public definitions of them as uninformed, emotional, or not legitimate representatives of their family's collective best interests, women have cultivated private, sex-segregated spaces in which they could create their own discourses where they were the authorities. Formal societies such as the Daughters of the American Revolution, as well as home-grown ones such as the Literary Society or the Wednesday Club, offer different circles of women the opportunity to gather together. Some women also find fellowship and recognition through organizations hosted by their churches. Through these service and study organizations they can talk about common problems and do substantial community service. Although some members do hold professional positions and others are recognized as opinion leaders in their communities, the women are not represented in the key elected offices in the county, nor were they in any of the top administrative levels in the county school system. Like the men to whom they are married, related, befriended, or acquainted, concerned women make the most of personal influence to make their interests and desires known. However, unlike the women, the men are the ones who make the final decisions in public.

On the Central High campus, there also are self-segregating, single sex groups who meet to create alternative spaces in which to air complaints, understand common interests, and share information including choice rumors. Small subsets of women teachers eat lunch together in the cafeteria and in their classrooms, take walks together in the evening, converse as the sports and academic teams they sponsor are practicing, and more as opportunities can be created around other family responsibilities.

Women faculty are not the only ones who seek informal spaces in which to define their mutual best interests and how to achieve these ends. One of these non-faculty cohorts is the all female lunchroom staff. These women range in age from barely 20 to over 50. Many attended Central High for one or more years; some are high school graduates. They work in three overlapping shifts, but they can all take a break in the late morning when the breakfast has been cleared and the lunch crowds have yet to arrive. Sitting with the lunches that they have just finished preparing, they talked about how powerless they felt, even as a united constituency, to get the school to district administration to respond to their repeated requests for (male) janitorial assistance. Angered by the litter of milk cartons, bits of food, and messy serving trays left behind by students, they also wanted to have corporeal punishment re instituted. Berating the administration for being unfair and insensitive, their voices got louder and louder until one of the older women said to the age-mate next to her, "Hush! Old woman!" They all laughed at this remark, but also looked nervously looked around the cafeteria to see if an staff or teachers had wandered in an overheard their forbidden assertiveness. They resumed their discussion, although on a more subdued note. They had many suggestions for change, b when it came down to putting their plans in action, they felt powerless and voiceless to do anything about it.

Parents as Partners

Changing Opportunities to Become Involved

In addition to bringing in a greater portion of the faculty and staff as stakeholders in the success of school policies, another key element was increasing the role of parents. A challenge in broadening the base of representation was bringing in parents as partners in the process of reform. The state of parental involvement was summed up by a teacher who wrote on faculty Survey I, "most parent participation is at the elementary level. Central High. seems to [be] in a different world. Students come to H.C.H.S., parents stay at the elementary."

Until recently, parents had been decidedly unwelcome as equal participants. Official disdain for the "meddling" of non-school personnel in school affairs had contributed to the near demise of the PTA and made Parent booster organizations peripheral to all but the sport or fine arts programs they supported. On the Faculty Survey I teachers just wanted to PTA to be as innocuous and inconspicuous as possible. At most, they should play a decorative role, supporting proms and providing money for incentive programs. They felt that other involvement would just cause them to be in the way. Respondents most wanted to see the PTA "support rather than criticize." Teachers warned that parents should "be more of an asset toward assisting our teachers and school and less impact on how to run our school." Satisfied with the standing limits on parental intrusion, 31 percent of Central faculty and staff agreed strongly that "People should leave it to the school personnel to set school policies and programs" (X=

2.87) However, only 17 percent of involved parents concurred; 50 percent checked, "I do not agree at all!" (X=2.06).

Central faculty and those parents who actually were involved at Central responded to the statement "Teachers and principals want high school parents to be involved." The mean faculty response was 4.03 with the modal response, "I agree most of the time." The fact that parents who were involved had a mean of 3.78 and a mode of 5, or "I definitely agree!" reflects the pattern that parents answered the questions with regard to the new administration at Central. It is interesting to note that involved parents were even less likely than teachers to agree that "Most high school parents want to be involved in child's education and in school activities" (Teachers X= 2.52, Involved parents X= 2.22, Adult GED students X=3.60 and Freshmen x=3.03). Clearly, these parents felt that they were exceptions. Several also made repeated comments that it seemed that since they were one of the few who took a stake in what happened at school they had to bear the brunt of most of the work.

Even with Mr. Newmann's efforts to encourage greater parental participation through the SBC and SBC committees, many of the involved parents felt that they were among the few who would believe that the atmosphere had really changed. Their peers remained skeptical. In a meeting of parents in which they talked about the most pressing problems at Central, parents talked about their own reluctance and the continued hesitancy shown by their fellows:

> Mrs. Jacobs: A lot of parents won't darken the door of the school. A lot of people don't feel welcome and a lot of people don't care. They don't really want you there, so why do you go?"
>
> Mr. Collins: Things have changed - now it's not what was happening before - parents are welcome. But people still believe what happened 30 years ago is still the case.
>
> Mr. Adams: We have a PR problem.

Mr. Collins continued that if parents were to really become partners, they would need to be treated with more respect when they arrived at Central. Speaking to some teachers who were also at the forum, he said:

> Elevate parents to the position they deserve. If that treatment would change, it's spread like wildfire and more people could come. But *are* parents a priority??

In this past phrase he was hinting at a point of concern, that is, that there was no place for groups to meet other than the library or in a classroom. Unlike in some of the new high schools that neighboring counties had built, there was no conference room or parent room. He noted, "I know we are already pressed for classroom space and personnel space, but parents *could* be a priority." However, for the foreseeable future, parents who wanted to come to Central would have to find spaces that they would use around the needs of the teachers and staff.

"What is Hindering Parent Participation?"

Faculty members were quite clear about what they saw as hindering parents from becoming partners - the parents themselves. In Faculty Survey I they were asked "What is hindering parent participation at Central?" They were also asked, "Who can or should do something about this?"

A few respondents felt that "nothing" was hindering parent participation. "They have every opportunity to be involved but you must understand that in this region a lot of parents don't care." Others elaborated on the theme of not caring, stating that "parents do not seem to care about their son or daughter," and that "I think that many parents are indifferent to what's going on here, or in their kid's lives" or "Parents don't care! They have no sense of work and are not interested in their children or the school system."

The largest group, almost a third, of responses cited "parent apathy" as the biggest obstacle. Parents were seen by this group as having a "lack of interest" and "lack of parental concern." "I believe parents are more content to sit back and blame teachers" stated one person. However, another pointed out the reciprocal nature of this problem; "we allow parents to not be involved in students['] education." And another added that although "parents are hindering themselves[, e]ventually more parents may get involved if we continue to try to involve them."

Teachers were aware that many of their neighbors felt that Central was a chaotic and confusing place, and not one that readily greeted visitors. Many noted that parents were wary of being called in by a principal. Respondents often linked "apathy and distrust" in their answers and many elaborated on issues of alienation that they felt were exacerbating parental disengagement. They believed that most parents were not used to being involved as "they have never had a need to be involved unless their child has been in trouble." But another again noted that maybe the ones who could do something about this were school staff. "I think unequal treatment and a feeling of not being heard is a problem." As a result of bad experiences, "most of our parents feel that they are not a part of our system. They sometimes feel intimidated." Another respondent added that a further consequence of this may be that "the only parents involved are those with negative attitudes toward Hickory County people."

School personnel are not the only ones who were seen to shun parental involvement. Respondents noted a "majority of students don't want the parents to be here." While for their part some "students don't want them involved," some "parents don't feel as if they are valuable in their 'growing' child[']s needs. That is, I think they feel unneeded."

"Only the Wrong Kind of People Get Involved."

An element in one of the responses revealed another key issue. When the respondent noted that only those with negative attitudes got involved, he was drawing on a long-standing belief among the teachers at Central, namely, that "only the wrong kind of people get involved."

Discussions about increasing representation often involved an explicit discussion of why parents should be involved in the first place. At the heart of these debates where questions about what constitutes a legitimate stakeholder. Many teachers felt that those parents who had risked to venture into Central staff's territory and serve on the SBC only did so because they had a personal point to make or a grudge to settle. Stated Mr. Walter:

> If they're satisfied running their household proper they don't get involved. They are people who want to get at *people*. Site-based is an opportunity for people who are P.O.'d at people, the superintendent, to get *back*. With some people that's not true, some people are interested in the *children*, but I've yet to see it here.

A more senior administrator agreed:

> Now only people with a negative attitude get involved. If they were concerned in a *positive* way - that means they're coming of their own free will, a positive approach, improving the school as a whole, not because they're upset about the effect on their own job. They should be there for the *kids* not themselves.

Another teacher in his department added, "you don't get the kind of people concerned that you'd want to be concerned."

On Faculty Survey I, a large number of respondents questioned the very legitimacy of the PTA as a representative, inclusive body of parents or a group that, at least in the past, had made positive contributions. Many wanted to have nothing to do with a parent- teacher organization if activist, outspoken parents were going to be in it. They justified their contempt by reinforcing the notion that these parents were quite unlike their more silent peers. "Get in the real world," stated one respondent, "they no way/no form represent the typical Knox county parent - and live their own life completely unaware there are people different than them."

Teachers contrasted these outspoken SBC and PTA members and parent advocates with their more reticent neighbors. Many teachers who did not want parents to be involved, saw intrusion into school affairs as evidence of moral deficiencies.

> People are more complacent, more upset with the education system. They just work with their own children and [see that they get] good grades, see if they're progressin' as they should. If they're doing their job the kids get good grades.

Mrs. Reilley concurred:

> Most of the good people don't have time. They go home and work with their own family. They don't sacrifice time just for the public. They're handling their own situation like they should. To get involved maybe they'd have to be concerned about the community as a whole. These days people are more selfish. You don't see many people concerned about people other than themselves.

However, those who would rather not have had parents involved let the matter lie at that. They did not want to encourage parents, especially vocal or critical ones, to have a formal role in reforming "their" school.

These assumptions about what motivated parents to become involved put those who did speak out in a quandary. If they got involved others charged that they were self-centered and only defending their own interests. If they did not become involved they were deemed disinterested. Either way, under this system, those who did not want to listen to external opinions had grounds for ignoring them.

Another Catch-22 was that although involved parents were criticized as being different from the "average" parent, teachers had quite a negative view of the average parent of their students. In a "quiz" I designed to determine if faculty had an accurate view of Hickory Countians (see Appendix) faculty were asked to estimate the proportion of students on free and reduced lunch, on welfare, and in single parent households. On all measures of poverty faculty overestimated their student body, sometimes by twice the actual amount. On those measures of success, e.g. the college going rate, faculty were also off, but there they underestimated the students. It was refreshing to know that at least they were very eager to receive a copy of the right answers in exchange for turning in the quiz.

Experts and Expertise

One of the main reasons why many faculty resented parents becoming stakeholders was that they did not consider non-professionals to be experts about education. As Mr. Wilkins stated at the beginning of this story, he resented that school board members who did not have a college, and perhaps not even a high school, degree [as was allowed prior to KERA] could tell him what to do. In his mind, parents were certainly not going to tell him how to run his classroom. Although he grounded his claim in the belief that parents did not understand how much he knew, he did not question his beliefs about how much he thought parents knew. Ironically, when he said this he was modeling just he kind of "expert" behavior that he disdained in others.

In order to claim their rights as SBC members, parents needed a considerable amount of expertise. They needed to know their rights and who to contact when they were being ignored. SBC parent representatives needed professional development as much as the new teacher representatives did; luckily Mr. Newmann was proactive in bringing trainers to Central to remediate them and tell them about the latest developments. They also needed to convince their peers that there were problems worth getting involved over. Mrs. Dalton, a SBC member, stated, "I know a few parents who don't see a problem - but they don't know what's going on!"

Knowledge was a pivotal divider between those who became involved and those who did not. Teachers - and paradoxically also the involved parents - reinforced the power of this barrier when they referred to non-participating parents repeatedly as being "uneducated." This pejorative label indicated not only that those parents lacked the requisite knowledge and public speaking skills to become involved, but that they lacked the moral qualities of well-schooled person too. That is, they were cast as lacking the commitment to persevere and gain an education. They were depicted in teacher conversations as ignorant, stubborn, incompetent, unable to grasp KERA details if it were shared with them, etc. Thus their ways of constructing these parents only served to reinforce he preconceived notions that educators had about them. Instead of motivating them to go about and meet the parents on their terms, they were reinforce din the belief that parents should come to their turf, but would not and could not do so as equals.

Teachers frequently cited low levels of education as reason in and of itself for parent s to feel ashamed and intimidated when coming to Central. In the Faculty Survey I the majority of respondents cited low levels of education and a (subsequent) lack of enthusiasm for education as major factors. (In 1990, the average education level of adults over age 25 is 8th grade and 80.6 percent of adults 25 or older have a high school degree or less.). One respondent phrased the problem as the "educational background of parents - they feel threatened, unworthy." This discomfort may be particularly heightened in interactions with school personnel. A colleague reiterated a prevalent excuse cite d by faculty members:

> I feel that most parents are intimidated by the teachers. Some feel they are looked down on because they are less educated and may not dress as well as the teachers. Things like this keep parents from participation.

Lack of success with education in the past, and low levels of high school completion were linked with non-support for graduation, as in this assumption of causality, "most of the parents are not educated and therefore they do not stress the importance to the children." Even if "nobody" else is hindering parent participation, change will not happen unless "people . . . want and see a need for education."

Teachers and staff saw parents as not having the expertise they needed to make a significant contribution. Many respondents felts that parents shied away from involvement due to a lack of knowledge, especially about KERA reforms. "[Eighty-five] % of parents don't have a clue about education," wrote one person. There is a "lack of the parents['] realization that their help is needed" and, further, a "lack of information about how they can help and a feeling of not being welcomed."

Lack of expertise was seen as an enduring and given aspect of the parents themselves. Asked who could do something about this, only one person wrote this "lack of encouragement [comes] from teachers and involved parents to other parents." Most of those who wanted to become stakeholders were left to their own devices to find out information. Because of the very few school-sponsored opportunities to learn about KERA, parents had to find their own ways to help themselves gain the knowledge they needed. Parents who had personal access to technology, including a fax machine, a photocopier, a computer, even the rare few who had access to the Internet, found that those were important tools in accessing and sharing the information that they needed.

Ironically, the same reasons that teachers used to describe the obstacles to parent involvement were invoked to fortify those barriers. If parents were seen as unable to understand a policy "correctly" what then was the purpose of trying to help them understand? In numerous discussions few teachers wanted to be the ones to arm those who had hitherto served well as their opponents. Further, a couple of staff members confided, if they had more information that would make them more allied with external educators, program innovators, etc. rather than as silent supporters of local teachers.

This points to a closely related issue, that of suspicion of "experts" in general. "Experts" were seen as those who had superior knowledge and/or connections. Their status was bolstered and legitimated by a formal degree and connections to others with power, either through a government program, agency, body, or office. Further, even local experts were seen as being outsiders to the extent that they were not able to be easily questioned or contradicted. In their recent experience, it seemed that those who descended on the schools as experts wanted to leave their own mark. Mr. Hamilton, a barber, noted that in Hickory county there was an especially high degree of suspicion about experts who came in from other places. He noted that often experts overlook the critical people skills that would make their ides more palatable. He said:

> A main obstacle in feeling that outsiders can help is that they don't volunteer without dictating. You have to work within the system, even to change the system. If you point out the deficiencies you need a offer a solution, suggest a positive suggestion. You can't come take over.

His statements that mandates would only lead to confrontation and antagonism was well-placed; the OEA had just served notice that if changes were not made they might have to come in and take over and remove the system of leaders who were there.

Teachers were particularly angered by the thought of experts coming in to dictate how they should run their schools. Whether parents or state investigators, they felt that these interlopers had best take care of their own affairs first. Educators' main examples of a cadre of helpers who exemplified the contradictions they saw in outside "assistance to us poor folks," were the VISTA and Appalachian Volunteers who came to Hickory County as part of the War on Poverty. They contributed to the local school system by organizing book drives, teaching, repairing buildings, and more. Karen, a former Appalachian Volunteers who stayed on to make a life in the region, said many of her fellows were attracted to life on the land, the freedom of relatively few restrictions, and the opportunity to help others. But the thing that Hickory Countians remember - and resent - most about them was they "thought they knew what was best for us - and we were older than they were," they "came in to tell us how to live." The inconsistencies that they saw in some volunteers, however, made them question these helpers even more. Mr. Dalton summarized his neighborhood's response, "they were hippie-types telling us mountain people how to upgrade our living standards and hygiene. If a guy is dirtier than you, that's a little suspect!" These recent interactions with "experts" only further served to undermine Central teachers' willingness to work with those who would offer their assistance and critique.

Alternative Spaces

Retreats and Places of Respite

In the process of broadening the base of representation, Central administrators supported the existence and operation of public spaces for discourse, analysis, and action. These provided important opportunities for those who participated in them to practice the kinds o f advocacy, decision-making, and consensus building that had been so alien to the way decisions had been made. But not all participated in these formalized, official spaces. Alongside these publicly accountable bodies of democratic decision-making, a second parallel universe of alternative spaces for discourse operated as a popular place of respite from the storm.

The process of addressing problems at Central was not fun. It was not smooth. It was full of confrontation, turmoil, and conflict. Many teachers who had "had the ear of the superintendent" or a principal no longer had that private connection. Other teachers wondered what would become of them when the "new regime" took over. They assumed that the new administration would be as selective about who they listened to as the former one had been, it would just be a different group. People wondered who they could trust. They wondered why they had to meet weekly in faculty meetings when the real discussions took place anywhere but there. Miss Hathaway remarked, "People will talk in the halls, talk in the teachers' lounge, but not in faculty meetings." Turning to me, she reinforced her point, "You've seen what our faculty meetings are - taking sides, gripes." Even by the November survey, faculty expressed a high degree of anxiety about their own future and expressed little confidence the SBC or its related meetings/committees were the best forum for airing their opinions.

The typical faculty and staff response was to retreat even more into the spaces and means of communicating that they considered their own. In their own meeting areas and gathered in the parking lot after school, they felt safer to express their voices. There they spoke with confidence and anger that was kept from the largely sanitized public forums. The faculty lounge was a particularly important, alternative space in which dissension could be expressed, frustrations aired, and criticism launched. Many times these were expressed verbally through discussions over lunch or before the school day as teachers came in and checked their mailboxes. There faculty could share their opinions without fear that one of the administrators would be likely to drop in; they seldom came to the lounge. In their space they could make hypotheses about what "really" was going on. They would guess who was in support of block and who wasn't. They could build coalitions and listen to hear who else shared a similar opinion. It was a place where they could create their own picture of the world. Although verbal exchanges were empowering means of expression for those who felt they were better off to refrain from speaking publicly, there was another, perhaps even more potent, form of communication that was centered in the teacher's lounge: photocopied flyers.

Photocopied Flyers

Once every couple weeks up to once every few days, a new example of a photocopied flyer would appear on the large bulletin board opposite the teachers' boxes. They also were taped or pasted up on the walls of the gym, and found their way to the janitors' closet, the lunchroom, back halls in an auxiliary building, and, occasionally, the bus garage. Often, those depicted would pull down the copy to hang like a certificate or diploma in their office. Six examples are included.

These flyers were a collage of ideas, pictures, graphics, and sayings. Some were simply typed or written on a computer as was the example that heads this story. A frequent source of basic illustrations was the local newspaper or a magazine like Time or Newsweek that had been overlaid with duplicated pictures of faculty taken from the yearbooks. Others took the form of elaborate, biting satires based on a well-known poem such as They Night Before Christmas and The Twelve Days of Christmas (both circulated in December). Although it was generally known which faculty members were most likely to have created these, no one officially took credit (or blame) for them.

The four examples give some of the range of ideas and opinions that were expressed through this medium. Example 1 was a play on a campaign poster. The teacher depicted was an opponent of the current members of the SBC if not the process itself. He was still a good friend of former administrators and a person who was pessimistic, if not outright antagonistic toward the new head principal and the policies that he felt were Mr. Newmann's doing. As a result of these crimes, the flyer maker wanted to insinuate that he should be condemned to serve on the SBC himself. This poster came in the spring and set off a series of discussions about who should actually run. Ironically, i the end, this teacher did run and was elected to the council.

The second example was another common motif, the reward poster. One of the janitors was depicted standing in front of the janitor's closet. Among this man's crimes were aspects of how he did (or did not do) his job, inside jokes about pranks that he

Figure 4-1

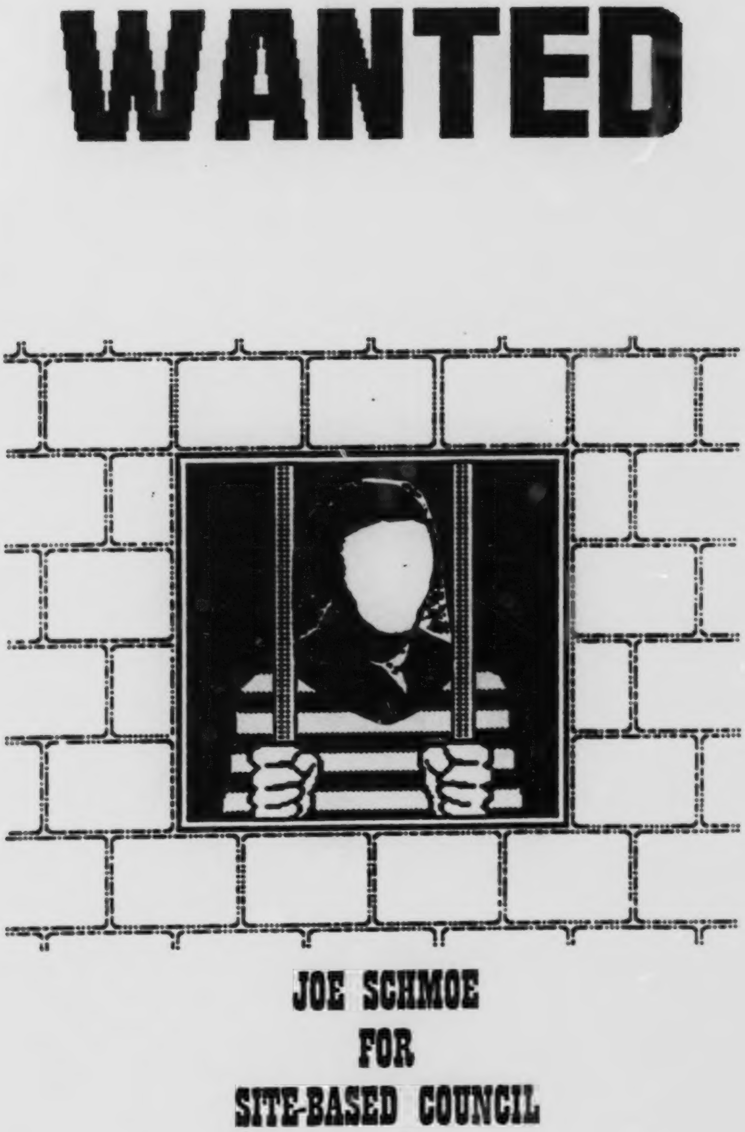
WANTED
JOE SCHMOE
FOR
SITE-BASED COUNCIL

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Figure 4-2

REWARD
$500

REWARD
$500

Reward for the conviction of this MAN!!!! Criminal has been on America's MOST WANTED list of Crimes for the following:

1. Cow Manure
2. Fish Abductions
3. Elevator Problems
4. Sleep on Job
5. Mishandling of a Mop
6. Keys to too many doors

----WARNING--FUGUTIVE IS ARMED WITH A MOP!!! NO ONE IS SAFE----

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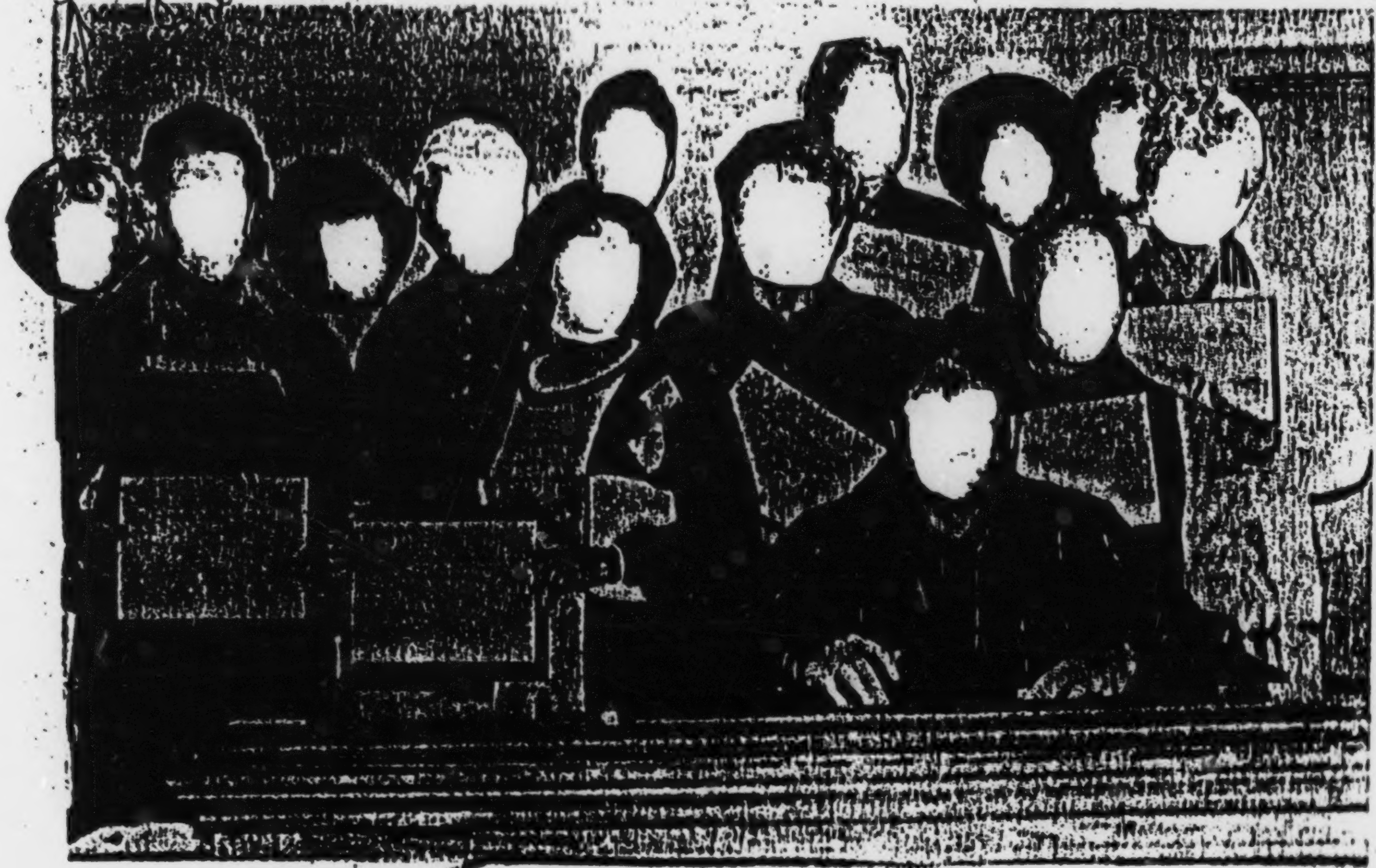
Figure 4-3

Am I to assume then that seniority just *might* mean something? Ha! Ha!

← In response to reconfiguring course assignments (by principals + SBC) that allowed new + junior teachers to get Honors classes.



'NATIONAL OLDER WORKER WEEK'

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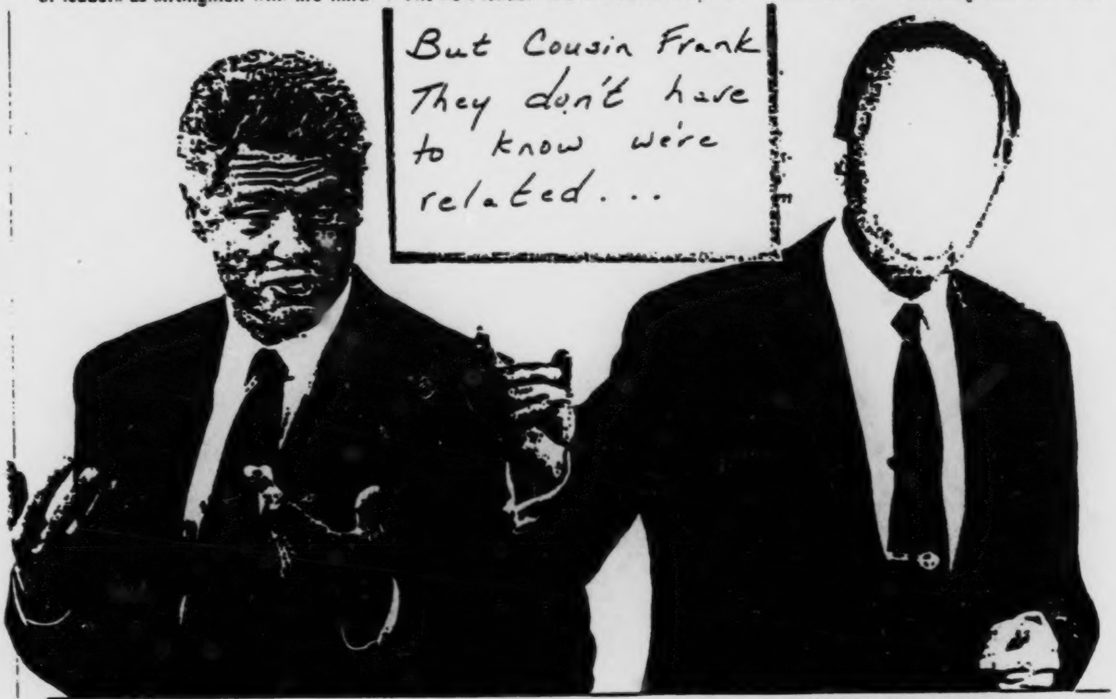
Figure 4-4

On a cool summer morning at Kenya's Maasai Mara National Reserve, biologist Robert Sapolsky and his colleagues are wending their way through the high grass, searching for the secrets of leadership. Coming upon a troop of baboons, Sapolsky's wife fixes a large male monkey in the sights of her blowgun and fires an anesthesia-laden dart. As the baboon falls to the ground, Sapolsky rushes up, draws a sample of blood and pops it into a cooler filled with dry ice.

Later, at his lab at Stanford University, Sapolsky's chemical analysis of the blood confirms his prediction: The baboon, the "leader" of the 20 or so animals in the troop, has one of the lowest levels of stress hormones among all the animals in the group. Contrary to the age-old notion of leaders as strongmen who are hard-charging and aggressive and rise to power through uncompromising battles with their rivals, Sapolsky's baboon research suggests that the most effective leaders tend to be mellow and highly controlled, and they derive their power far more from forging alliances than from vanquishing their foes – in other words, says Sapolsky, "just like Ronald Reagan."

Sapolsky's work is part of a growing body of research suggesting that leadership is intimately connected to a person's biology. Effective leaders not only have the looks and body language to inspire followers but also possess a unique biochemical cocktail of hormones and brain chemistry that helps them build alliances and cope with stress. These traits amount to a kind of "social intelligence" that is different from conventional IQ: The best leaders are not necessarily the smartest, strongest or most aggressive of the group but rather the most expert at navigating the often treacherous waters of social interactions.

Neuropolitics. A major source of the special "chemistry" between leaders and followers is the actual brain chemistry of the leaders themselves. Michael Raleigh and his colleagues at the University of California at Los Angeles have found that the dominant male and female monkeys in a group typically have a higher level of the brain chemical serotonin than do their subordinates. Further, Raleigh found that if the dominant male is removed from the group, the subordinate male who rises to power shows increased levels of serotonin. Raleigh also discovered that if he removed the dominant male and gave a subordinate male a "booster shot" of a drug known to raise



But Cousin Frank
They don't have
to know we're
related...

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Figure 4-5
Retyped from dark red paper

The Twelve Days of Christmas
Sung by HCHS Teachers and Staff

On the first day of Christmas
My true love sent to me
A new tall principal
And a partridge in a pear tree.

On the second day of Christmas
My true love gave to me
Two vice principals
My God! One is it she
And a partridge in a pear tree.

On the third day of Christmas
My true love gave to me
Three new computers
Has anybody seen them?
Where can they be?
A new tall principal
And a partridge in a pear tree.

On the fourth day of Christmas
My true love gave to me
Four teachers wailing
They must teach English
And a partridge stuck in a pear tree.

On the fifth day of Christmas
My true love gave to me
Five brand new suits
For Coach Harris
Thank you Jenny
We must buy more [Local newspapers]
And a dead bird in a pear tree.

On the sixth day of Christmas
My true love gave to me
Six carolers singing
They must teach English
Where's that video?
Can you believe it?
We are so talented
Nobody knew it.

On the seventh day of Christmas
My true love gave to me
Seven halls for walking Where's our new principal?
Has anybody seen him?
Yes, we have seen him
Just around the corner
Up the right stairs - over in the new gym
Down through the hallway - back up
The stairway into the library
Over in the old gym, out through the
Lunchroom, into the backyard
Down the front sidewalk
Over to a trade school
And in the bus garage
He has holes in his new shoes
And a partridge in a pear tree.

On the eighth day of Christmas
My true love gave to me
Eight Christmas baskets
Leo's got a hernia
Santa's got the sore throat
Harris has some new suits
We have new computers
Can anybody work them?
Where's that new principal?
And a partridge in a pear tree.

On the ninth day of Christmas
My true love gave to me
Nine Santa's singing
It must be the Tech boys
I can't find my partridge
I thought I saw some feathers
Down near the lunchroom
What can this mean?
Harris found his new shoes
We've all grown to love him
Now he has some new clothes
Thank God for Jenny
And that partridge in a pear tree.

On the tenth day of Christmas
My true love gave to me
Ten new report cards
Santa doesn't like them
Who's under the mistle toe
I looks like Joe Schmoe
He first was dancing - now he is singing
Dressed in a red suit
Red light's a flashing - where did he go to?
Where is Mrs. Santa? no one can find them
Who's that in the fire truck? they look so familiar
Five brand new suits
Four teachers wailing
Three new computers
Two vice principals
And a new tall principal.

On the eleventh day of Christmas
My true love gave to me
Eleven new committees
To make three decisions
Have you been on one?
Five brand new suits
And a partridge stuck in a tree.

On the twelfth day of Christmas
My true love gave to me
Twelve teacher meetings
Will this never end?
We have new principals
All are our best friends
Nobody chewing gum, we don't wear hats
Five brand new suits
Where's the egg nog?
The English teachers drank it
Now they are happy
We're sure glad we have them
Give us a Christmas basket
Leo's having surgery
Someone cut down the pear tree
The Wrestlers look suspicious
I think we should ban them
Have you seen the principal?
Five brand new suits
And a partridge in a pear box!

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Figure 4-6
Retyped from dark green paper

Twas the Night Before Christmas
at Cold Chill High

Twas the night before Christmas and all thru the schoolhouse
Not a creature was stirring, not even Charley-the-louse
The stockings were hung in the classroom with care
we were hoping by morning they would still be there.

The children were snuggled all tight in their lockers
With visions of burning bathrooms stuffed in their dockers
And Gladys in her kerchief, me with no hat or cap
Had just settled down for a sixth period nap.
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter
I sprang from my desk to see what was the matter
Out into the hallway I flew with a flash
Tore down the bulletin board, fell over the trash
When what to my wondering eyes should appear
But white vans from Frankfort and not a single reindeer
With a little o'le driver so lively and quick
I knew in a moment this was not St. Nick.

So out to the school houses the courses they flew
With a sleigh full of papers and my certificate too.
And then in a twinkling I heard on the roof
Oh' the ranting and raving -- but it was only a spoof
'Cause many of the stories had a fairytale theme
Everyone knew this had not been a dream
As I drew in my head and was turning around
Here came the janitors and bus drivers a bound
They looked like a hunter that had just lost their hound
They were dressed all in fur from their head to their foot
And their clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot.
A bundle of tools they had flung on their back
They were off to the boiler room to open a pack
The end of a cigarette they held tight in their teeth
And the smoke it encircled their heads like a wreath.

He was friendly and kind, a right jolly old elf
And I laughed when I saw him in spite of myself
A stab in the back and two new black eyes
Soon gave me to know it wasn't all lies.
He spoke lots of words, none worth repeating
Filled out the forms then sent us a greeting
Sticking his finger high in the air
He gave us the message, enough to cause grey hair
And I hear him exclaim as he drove out of sight
Merry Christmas Hickory High, you've just seen the light!

had pulled (most likely on the author), and questionable practices that made him a topic of conversation (having the keys to too many doors). As noted in the chapter on Central High, the custodians are important gatekeepers who allow only certain people access but who enjoy a great deal of access and autonomy themselves. This was widely known and frequently criticized by the teachers. By making fun of the resources that this janitor had to defend himself (a mop) the author was pointing both to his lowly station but also warning readers that he could indeed be dangerous if one got on his bad side.

Example 3 was taken from a local newspaper article about "National Older Worker Week." The author had added copies of yearbook pictures from Central's elder teaching and support staff. Perhaps the author was trying to make a comment about the amount of respect shown senior faculty, perhaps he or she was just making fun of a celebration that pulled out some faculty for special recognition, that out them above others. An interesting thing about this poster is that it provoked one of the teachers depicted to write "Am I to assume then that seniority just might mean something? Ha! Ha!" Few of the posters provoked written responses. This comment came at the tail end of a bitter response to the way that teaching assignments had been allocated that resulted in more equity between new and veteran teachers in who received the privilege of teaching Honors classes.

Example 4 was way of pointing out that the teacher depicted was acting too liberal. In this Republican stronghold, President Clinton was only openly supported by a few faculty members. The author was probably sending the message that the teacher was trying to get on a questionable leader's (Newmann's) good side by going to the workshops on how to score a KIRIS portfolio. As one of the very few men who had gone, he had been ribbed by his peers as "going to learn to score with the women!" Those in the faculty lounge wanted to know if his wife knew of his "extracurricular activities." More friendly digs were made as the joke made its way around the room.

The fifth and sixth examples were composed for Christmas time distribution. They contain specific references to those who had been outspoken about reforms such as block and Tech Prep, those who had regularly attended faculty meetings, the state investigators, the futile or punitive activities of the new principals, the pace of change, the effect of dissension on teachers, and more.

Although these flyers may seem to be vindictive, and indeed some were bitter criticism by anonymous critics, they also have positive effects. Not just anyone could compose such a flyer and not just anyone was an appropriate target. For example, despite the many comments about Mr. Newmann, he was never the object of flyer (although he was use din the poems). Mr. Briggs, a veteran teacher, explained that that honor was reserved or those who would understand that it was "just a good old boy" thing to do and that by being included as part of the joke they were actually being honored as an insider.

Other posters had messages that only those with a significant amount of "common knowledge" about Central could understand. For example, a flyer in a previous year had featured the face of a well-liked former administrator and stated that he was for a proposed SBC policy. Explained Mrs. Gray, it was an extremely effective, non-confrontational way of generating support for that particular proposal among many staff. For as she read it, the message clearly was, "If he was for it, how could anyone be against it?"

Other Community Spaces

Those who were not members of the Central High discussions did not lack for other alternative spaces in which to freely discuss the problems and reform at Central. The various mountain hollows, back roads, small towns, and clusters of businesses and post offices provided opportunities for people from all walks of life to meet and talk. Most people had their own favorite places where they shopped, swapped tales, and told stories on others.

Students, in their metaphor writing exercises, wrote about the diverse kinds of venues that proliferated throughout the county. "Country stores are like talk shows everbody meets their and tell's what they know or what they do," wrote Mike. "[C]ountry stores are like talk shows ever body meets their and tell's what they know or what they do," added Rick. The writing pair of Jim Wayne and Dave stated, "Front porches are counseling booths. On Sunday, people sit on front porches and discuss the nexter week." Both men and women had their various gathering spots: "Men gather around the Grocery Store are like bees gathering around their hives to talk about their wifes." Explained the author, "these things are important in our life. they are possible things that are neede to our life." Amanda wrote about her experience:

Women in a beauty shop are like hens in a henhouse, they're always clucking about something. whenever I go to a beauty shop I always notice all the women talking really loud and gossiping about everything and everybody. Although in the discussions that these writings sparked most students talked about these as fun places to hang out and learn, Crystal noted that adults' lessons and moral lessons could be tiring. She wrote, "Living here is like living inside of a church because someone is always preaching to you."

Other students noted that these forums could be places where bad news traveled fast. Traci and Suzanne criticized, "A country neighbor is just like Geraldo, their always sticking their nose where it doesn't belong!" Lisa warned of the dangers of perpetuating tales:

> Gossip spreads like a bad disease. You tell one person then they tell someone else. Sooner or later somebody gets hurt. So its best to keep it safe with your mouth shut. If you don't stop it just keep on spreading to person to person.

At a meeting of the PTA, parents also complained that it seemed that only bad news was passed along in their communities. They noted that in the past there had been a lack of much official information - at least any that the average person trusted - and in its stead people had tended to assume the worst. "Only bad news travels fast!" summed up Mrs. Collins. The half dozen parents at the meeting decided that "Central" really needed to do a better job of public relations. But, they agreed other members of the community also had to play a role in sending positive messages about the school. Pointing to several other towns in the region whose merchants proudly soaped their windows when home ball games were held, the parents commented:

> Mr. Collins: We don't see school colors - in [nearby town] when there is a ball game the merchants paint their windows.
>
> Mrs. McCormick: You need to flash Central High up there, that says that the school means something, that the kids mean something. It's not just, 'Our scores are low.'
>
> Mrs. Clearsy: The community only gets negative information about the schools. We need to work more with the community - and with Central High that's pretty much the whole county!

The parents then went to work and brainstormed a list of businesses that they could target. Each person knew several other prominent civic leaders and intended to work what personal networks they could to spread good news about their teens' school.

In talking about how they were going to motivate those who had shied away from becoming stakeholders in the public dialogues, community leaders who had invested in anti-drug and career shadowing programs at Central, involved parents who came to Boosters and SBC meetings, and outspoken teachers expressed the concern that they were taking on a big challenge. Mr. Reilley explained what he saw an almost an innate, visceral resistance among the average person to leave the known neighborhood spaces and venture into unknown territories. He compared the orientation of the "common folks" as he saw it:

> People here are passive - they don't show ambition. In their own way and in their own peer group they are public, but outside that peer group they'd have a hard time. If'n they'd move to Chicago, they wouldn't find their local church there so they wouldn't go at all. They wouldn't find their way, they wouldn't feel socially comfortable. To move 'em is like giving birth again.

Ms. Brandon noted that people made strategic choices not to become involved. Maybe, she noted they were smarter than community leaders gave them credit for in their preference to remain within their own circles. She assessed that non-involved people really did know what they were doing, "All through life, they become more aware of what is going on. I think they just close their doors and just live on their own on welfare." Ms. Brandon noted that this withdrawal form public spaces was not unique to Hickory County:

> That's what used to be labeled 'Appalachia,' but its now in the cities, the suburbs, the slums. . . actually people are smart, they know how to work the system.

When the official bodies did not seem to represent their interests and leaders seemed uninterested in actually incorporating a diversity of opinions or responding to critique, most people felt that the most reasonable course of action was to use alternative spaces. In that way one could stay involved and informed, yet not risk censure or even repercussions from those who were outside of or above one's own circle. They made the system of alternative spaces work for them.

CHAPTER SIX

THE THIRD STORY: SELECTING A NEW SUPERINTENDENT

When you realize that something is a problem,
if you realize it and he's still there what are you going to do?
But if you realize it and he's gone, then it's possible."
- district educator

One reason it was such a story is that it's a change of a way of life,
a change of the times. It signals that possibility that things
would be done out in the open, objectively rather than decided
by a group behind closed doors.
- member of the Superintendent Screening Committee

The Problem

In a special Board meeting in the middle of November, the Superintendent of twenty years announced that he was retiring on January 1, due, as the local paper later reported, "to health reasons." The Superintendent cited a long-standing heart condition that had so reduced his capacity to deal with the stresses of his position, that he felt he needed to retire much earlier than he had anticipated.

This announcement set off a chain reaction of speculations around the small, closely-connected county. People were both sad and anxious about the future of their schools now that the leader that many of them had known since their own school days was leaving. At the same time, there was an undercurrent of anticipation; this change in leadership could herald a significant shift in the district's posture toward the KERA reform that the superintendent had only grudgingly supported.

It was well known that the investigation by the Office of Educational Accountability, the legislative office charged with monitoring districts' compliance with KERA, was becoming more focused on specific allegations against the superintendent and his administration. As of the resignation, nothing had been either conclusively proven or released to the public. However, this left even more room for public speculation. Those Central teachers and others who supported Superintendent

McAllister did not shy away from implicating the State officials in their friend's illness, stating that the State had pushed a good man too far. On the other hand, more than a few Central teachers were convinced that the superintendent had left while he still could do so without sanctions.

The superintendent of the county schools had been a controversial figure, seen by some as a benefactor but by others as, at best, a benevolent dictator. Yet all had to acknowledge that he was the undisputed leader whose favor anyone wishing a job, contract or promotion had to gain. The Board chair, ever one for colorful remarks, told the local newspaper that the retiring superintendent was "one of the old-time school superintendents who have lead [sic] school systems into the modern era. 'He's sort of like Moses. He brought us through the wilderness, and someone else will have to bring us into the promised land.' " Not as convinced of the Superintendent's leadership qualities, a struggling business owner who had taken a more active voice in school affairs through one of the Booster Clubs, issued the rejoinder, "Maybe [the Board chair] was referring to the fact that Moses and his followers wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, as the children in [our] school system has been doing for the past 20 years!"

Whatever county residents had thought of their school leader, the possibility of searching for a replacement through the new public process mandated by KERA stirred the public's interests and imaginations. The problem to be solved was not just a question of *who* would be selected, but *how* that person would come into his or her position.

A Once in Lifetime Chance

Previous to KERA, the Superintendent and the Board had met privately, and after negotiating and bargaining, they named the successor. Influence over the decision could only be exercised through personal connections and conversations by the few who had a good relationships with the decision-makers. The only way that the other members of the public could protest the decision was to vote out a board member, often years after the fact of the hiring. And to do so put one in a precarious position, for then as now, the superintendent of the Hickory County Schools controlled the largest, most lucrative "business" in the county, employing over 700 people and indirectly benefiting others through service contracts.

The school system's corner on the supply of well-paying jobs is all the more striking when compared to the size of other companies in this large county. The number of people who, prior to the advent of school-based councils, were dependent upon the good will of the school board and superintendent is more than two and half times the number of part and full time employees at the next largest company, a brassiere (or as Mr. Dobbs, a civic leader, explained, a "ladies' unmentionables") manufacturer. Essentially all of this manufacturing company's non-managerial staff are women and make a relatively good wage. In 1996, to the dismay of many Hickory Countians who depended on that job, the parent company announced that the sewing shop would be shut down and moved to the Far East in an effort to take advantage of even cheaper foreign labor. The number of people employed through the schools is more than three times the total employed at either an industrial sealants plant or in the entire "food service equipment" category as defined by the Census.

In addition to the large share of professional jobs, the public schools have a near monopoly on education in Hickory County. According to the Census (1990), of the 7,439 children 3 years and older who are enrolled in school of some kind, only 2.8 percent attend a private institution. Those who do go to either a private, social-service or church run preschool, or attend a Catholic school system in a nearby county. A small additional number board at or are bussed to a small, religiously-sponsored settlement school for youth in the furthest, least accessible corner of the county. There they join other young people from adjoining counties whose parents value the alternative setting and/or prefer to keep their children close to home rather than see them bussed an hour or more to the respective consolidated schools. Thus the leader of the county's school system touched nearly every child.

Since 1990 under the new provisions in KERA, stakeholders are to have greater representation and input into the process of screening applicants before the final Board nomination. The role of the SSC is, at a minimum, to do one or more of the following, depending on the charge given them by the Board as well as their own inclinations and skills; review the applications and supporting materials, conduct background checks, and interview candidates. At the end of the SSC process, the committee is to make recommendations to the Board members. The Board retains the ultimate authority to select the new superintendent.

Convening the actors

Immediately after the Superintendent's announcement, the new procedure for electing those who would serve on the KERA-mandated Superintendent Screening Committee (SSC) was set into motion. In the law, this Committee is to be comprised of one Board member, one principal representative, two teacher representatives, and one parent representative. The Board may not legally appoint any other members to the SSC . At the same special Board meeting when the Superintendent announced his retirement, one of the Board members was appointed to serve on the SSC. He was a prominent local businessman with school-age children, including one child at Central High.

Other constituencies got mobilized their members to select a representative. Within three days after the announcement, the local chapter president of the Kentucky Education Association sent out a memo outlining the procedures for the anticipated teacher election. Nominations were taken and each school voted for a representative. The final list of ten candidates (5 women and 5 men) was submitted for a vote. Only teachers were allowed to vote and a sign-in list was required so that non-authorized people did not participate. The two finalists, both men, either currently were or had been teachers at Central. The principals likewise met and selected a representative, deciding on Central principal Mr. Newmann as their choice. In a very small meeting held in Central High's library, the various PTA/PTOs of the district also elected their representative, the outspoken member of Central's site-based council. The end result was that all five of the middle-aged men, Mr. Adams, Mr. Broughton, Mr. Newmann, Mr. Smith, and Mr. Waters, who were elected to serve on the SSC had direct connections to Central High, a matter that later not only served as a common reference point but also as a source of tension.

Challenges

For those who hoped to see these men act as a unified force, it seemed a dubious coalition from the outset. The most obvious issue, one that set off rumblings of misgivings that echoed from Central's teachers' lounge all the way down the hall to the janitor's closet, was that several of the men had been personally hurt through their involvement in the all too recent process of selecting Central's new principal. One of the teacher representatives had been a prime candidate for the principalship at Central, and a favorite of many teachers. The parent representative had been a vocal member on the SBC that had selected Mr. Newmann over this local man. Mr. Newmann needed to defend his precarious, semi-legitimate position, wedged as he was in the middle of the conflict set in motion by his hire. Concerns about lingering resentments made many observers uneasy. "These wounds run deep" summed up the other two committee members, drawing me aside after one of the early meetings, adding that they hoped that they would be able to focus in on their common task. Spectators also wondered if these lingering rivalries would undermine the group's ability to be fair and to put the interests of others first. Would each work in the best interests of the children of the county or his own?

The SSC members were also divided in their belief that this new body could really change the dynamics of how decisions were made in the county. The SSC format had been forced upon the district leaders; as a result, this SSC was seen as a foreign instrument inserted into the local corpus by KERA under the watchful eye of the hovering OEA. As a result, the men knew that their efforts to make the SSC process a success would be met with some degree of resistance by those who had formerly had the exclusive powers to make the choice of a successor. Further, by being identified with one of KERA's more public aspects, the representatives were taking the risk of looking like they were supporting the reform as a whole. For two of the SSC members, this was not a problem, as they were decidedly enthusiastic about KERA and the potential that the reform's initiatives had for improving educational achievement as well as the level of community engagement with their schools. However, for the other three, who were either more critical or decidedly pessimistic about KERA's track record of bringing change to district policies and practices, this identification was problematic.

There was considerable public speculation as well as to what they would actually be able to accomplish. The legal responsibilities and limitations to the SSC's authority are spelled out in the Kentucky School Laws. The Board must take the SSC's recommendation into account before appointing a superintendent, "but the board shall not be required to appoint a superintendent from the committee's recommendation." Further, in the Opinions of the Attorney General published with the Law, the Board "has the discretion to consult with and to receive recommendations from sources other than the committee in order to insure consideration of qualified applicants and to enable the board to honor its commitment to Affirmative Action" Thus, in order to garner legitimacy in the eyes of their constituents, the members of the SSC had to buck the wide-spread local perceptions that they were a mere token organization established by the State through "their" KERA, but with little ultimate influence over the powerful, local Board. Skepticism abounded at the beginning. "It's going to be business as usual" predicted Miss Gray and Mr. Hamilton, standing together doing hall duty.

Theirs was a difficult task. The five men were faced not only with hosting a public process for screening applicants, but they also had to address head-on three underlying paradigms that informed how Hickory Countians thought about long-standing practices for selecting leaders. In addition, during the process they also had to come face-to-face with local conceptualizations of "leadership" itself. First, the superintendency had come to be seen essentially as a position for life. In the last 53 years there had been only 3 superintendents in Hickory County, unlike in other areas of the state, where the average tenure of superintendents was just a few years Further, the popular account of how this particular Superintendent came to his position assumed that he had been "given" the high-status superintendency in compensation for his cousin inheriting the lucrative, family-led business position that, under local understandings of patriarchal successorship, "should" have gone to him. As a result, the superintendency was tinged with a sense of entitlement comparable to his cousin's. Criticizing the local elite's position that the superintendency was one of several positions to be bartered among themselves without outside interference, a member of the SSC noted, "There's a lot of hard feelings here that we have to overcome. . . people see these positions like a birthright and this is a new way of doing things."

Second, the probable line of succession for the superintendency was already known. Most people could readily name several of the men who were reputed to be on the informal list of likely successors. All were educators in this small county. Given the small regional social circles and shared interests, they were also friends, colleagues and/or relatives of the Superintendent and his extended family.

Third, local mores encouraged people not to speak ill of a person, especially after he or she was "gone" (an allusion to being dead). The preference was for using euphemisms or round about ways of saying which characteristics or actions would have been preferred rather than explicitly criticizing the powerholder. In general, this taboo was observed in public statements, especially the Retirement Program honoring Superintendent McAllister. However, a greater candor and range of opinions were expressed in the many private conversations that I had with people behind closed classroom doors, at the laundry-mat, and sitting around having fresh deli pizza and smoking at the sandwich counter in our corner store. The Superintendent was not really gone, he would continue to enjoy his circle of friends and family and live in this county indefinitely. Many believed that he would continue to exert some degree of influence over district affairs, even if only in an advisory capacity. As a result, if the SSC was to ask about the shortcomings of the present leader in order to generate criteria for selecting a successor, they had to do so in a way that would enable the retired Superintendent to remain in his home in town and be treated with the dignity and respect that most people felt that he, as their long-time leader, deserved. Neighbors and professional colleagues noted that keeping the schools open and running had been no mean task given the limited financial resources and ambivalent community support. "I did the best with what I had," the Superintendent stated to me, "and I don't apologize for anything."

Getting Organized

The SSC met for the first time on December 5th. (See the Appendix for the timeline of SSC meeting dates and actions taken as submitted to the School Board in their final report). The initial meetings of the SSC were spent organizing themselves and working out meeting logistics. Principal Newmann was elected chair, more a spokesperson position than one with any authority to act independently of the group. He was enthusiastic about accepting the spotlight that this position would likely generate. Other members concurred that he was a good, strategic choice. Mr. Newmann already was associated with pro-KERA sentiments, and thus his reputation could hardly be damaged further if the SSC were to fall on its face. This initial arrangement also allowed those members of the SSC who were not active supporters of the reform to maintain their distance - and thus lessen their responsibility - if need be.

Given the common bond with Central High as well as the school's midway location in the county, meetings were held in Central's library. This room was large enough to accommodate any crowd that should happen to gather, but also intimate enough for the men to draw several of the large wooden tables together into a square and thus to meet facing each other. The heating of the library was like that in the rest of the high school - unpredictable and largely uncontrollable. The school was heated by an ancient coal furnace that is slow to heat up and uneven in its distribution of warmth across the building. As a result, the temperature varied considerably, often providing a preliminary topic of conversation as the men waited for all of their members to arrive. One time, when school had been closed due to impassable roads and flash flooding, the heat had not been turned on at all. Since it would take hours to get it going, the men moved over to a room in a newer, auxiliary building on campus that did have some heat. Most meetings were held on Monday nights because of several members' responsibilities to their sons' and/or their school's basketball games. In general however, when needed, all evenings were considered to be available except Wednesdays, which were reserved for church activities.

Legally, all of the SSC meetings, except the parts when candidates were discussed on a personal basis, were open to the public. However, few of either the regularly scheduled or special call meetings were announced in the newspaper, although notices of some meetings were sent to the paper by press time. In general, the only non-members who regularly attended meetings were the SSC's secretary, a representative of the press, and one or two interested Board members.

At the first meeting, the members decided that they would benefit from having a secretary. First, they anticipated a complex process of negotiations and public input, and no one had the time to keep all the paperwork together in addition his regular job. A second reason was that from the outset they wanted the process to be accountable, i.e. with records of their proceedings and accurate correspondence with the Board and candidates. Confidentiality and impartiality were of supreme concern, and no local person came to mind as suited to the job. I saw this as an ideal opportunity to combine my interests in documenting the process with their own needs for such documentation. Knowing that the matter of a secretary would be discussed at the meeting, I attended and presented, for those who had not already interacted with me at Central, my own research interests and professional commitment to confidentiality. As there were no other candidates for secretary at the first, invitation-only meeting, I was appointed to that position. Over the next several months of every second week SSC meetings, they came to welcome my tape recorder and fastidious notes, often referring back to them. Joking at the 9-page single-spaced minutes, Mr. Waters once kidded Mr. Adams, "you *must* have said that, Maureen wrote it down."

The five men agreed that their task was fundamentally important; they were elected to have a hand in deciding who one of the most powerful people in their county would be for an indefinite period of time. The seriousness of their task, and the importance of earning the public's confidence, were not lost on them. "We are starting a new era in the Hickory County schools. If we start playing games with this hiring process," Mr. Smith stated, "we will have compromised ourselves, along with the children of Hickory County."

But before the members of the SSC could work out programmatic goals, they had to address head on fundamental issues that had undermined public confidence and wide-spread direct participation in school policy making. In the past, well-connected or daring individuals could go to a Board member or administrator or the Superintendent and try to influence decisions, e.g. hiring a relative, but up to now there had been no formal provisions to selecting representatives who would engage in public negotiations on behalf of a wider constituency. How information about needs and preferences was to be gathered, shared, and represented was an open question. How the men would work together to facilitate, even model, participatory decision-making also remained to be seen. As representatives, they were taking a stake both in the success of the SSC and the final candidate.

The men felt that they would be successful if they fulfilled the minimal responsibilities outlined in KERA. But, more than that, they felt that they had a responsibility to their peers, and more generally, "to our children," to do their best. All five were well aware going into the process that more was at stake than simply who was selected; the success of the SSC process was an important component of grass-roots participation. They knew, on a conscious level, that they were challenging the power of the Board. If their voices were to be heard - and listened to - they had to be pro-active and set their own agenda.

Setting the Agenda

Four basic issues and an organizing phrase arose during very first meetings and remained pivotal throughout the process. First, confidentiality about who was selected, about the criteria for ranking candidates, and, later, about what was said in the interviews was of prime importance to SSC members. Second, finding a way to give equal voice to the divergent perspectives within the SSC and then find common ground for a united course of action was critical if they were to work together. Third, SSC members were concerned with finding out as much information about this relatively new process as possible, and from as many reputable sources as appropriate. Fourth, they were committed to giving the Screening Committee process a chance to work. Therefore, not rushing the procedure unduly was deemed important from the outset. Finally, during the process of defining these agenda goals, an organizing phrase emerged that summarized the growing common sense that they were working "in the best interests of the children of Hickory County."

First, confidentiality was mentioned at the first meeting and arose as a concern at subsequent meetings, especially as the interviewing of candidates progressed. The norm in the clusters of neighborhoods that dotted the county was to share information freely, and to engage in public discussion of the schools' affairs. In order to avoid a selection process run by innuendo and rumor, committee members debated whether they should sign a pact of confidentiality. This mutual agreement, they hoped, would serve to ensure anonymity to the candidates, mitigate against the inevitable spread of rumors, and prevent leaks about the criteria and questions such that some of the local candidates would gain an unfair advantage. However, the elected representatives were split as to whether a written pact would mean anything as personal intentions were what would bind them, not a piece of paper. As Mr. Waters put it, "Signing his name don't make a difference. In this day and time it's not so binding. He has to meet his conscience." However, ultimately the group decided that trust needed to be formally expressed. Mr. Waters drafted the document and all, more or less reluctantly, signed on.

Second, the SSC representatives were concerned about voice within their own group. Members discussed whether decisions should be made by consensus or a vote. The primary reasons given in support of consensus were that it is "what the education reform [KERA] is all about," and that constituents would be more pleased with a decision if they felt that it reflected the input and agreement of the entire Screening Committee. Seeing this diverse committee effectively work together, SSC members noted, was an important signal to the similarly fragmented community at large. While members agreed that a vote could ultimately be taken "as a last resort," nearly all of their decisions were indeed reached by consensus. The concern that all members be included in the decision-making process went so far as to contact an absent member to ask for his opinion before the secretary was given permission to follow through on an action decided on at a meeting.

Third, members wanted to be well-informed about this new process. They were concerned that they know the regulations regarding the SSC, both for the sake of knowing their rights and for informing the Board as to *their* responsibilities to cooperate with the Screening Committee. Instead of relying on information filtered down through the Board, members of the SSC sought out officials from the Department of Education who were knowledgeable about KERA provisions for the screening process. They also looked into the possibility of hiring professional consultants whom the SSC perceived to be unbiased; "They'll all tell you the truth." This desire to consult with experts not associated with the School Board, and to gather model interviews and criteria from other rural Appalachian searches later became a point of friction between the SSC and the Board.

Not just one but several SSC members took the initiative to send for written guidelines from official state agencies. The more knowledge they had in their arsenal, they felt, the more power they would have to counter Board statements about what they had to do, or were limited in doing. Indeed, as the process progressed, SSC members took advantage of the opportunity to cite these other sources when describing why their own choices were legitimate and reasonable. They found that having that knowledge conveyed power. The materials that continued to come in over the course of the first months of the new year were added to each person's working dossier. As a group, they perused copies of a booklet from the Kentucky Education Association as well as from the Office of Educational Accountability. The Screening Committee found all of the documents to be valuable sources of information, especially in regards to the role of the committee vis-a-vis the Board, the design of interviews, and strategies for increasing public involvement. Both documents encourage the use of public surveys and forums. "The process must be accessible so that the local community can become involved," state the OEA materials. Further, it must "be open and perceived to be open by all prospective candidates and the total community." The guides also provided needed reassurance to the SSC members that the Committee, while it needed to work constructively with the Board, is neither bound to the timelines or criteria set by the Board nor obligated to work with the Board's own consultant, if any. Both guides also recommend that the SSC submit a final list of *five* names *in order of preference* to the Board, a matter that would prove pivotal in the final decision.

This search for external opinions, especially those that offered divergent views from that proffered by the School Board's parent organization, was later to become a source of tensions between the SSC and the consultant hired by the School Board, Mr. Lawlor. The consultant felt that he and his organization were *the* experts on using the SSC process, and did not feel that other educational organizations should be directly providing screening committees with dubious information. The Board's own consultant told Mr. Newmann blankly that he did not hold either document in high regard, calling the KEA packet "a complete piece of trash." Further, he did not feel these interloping agencies to be legitimate authors of such guides, stating that the OEA is "not qualified to issue this document about screening committees and how they function."

Skepticism about the ability of distant professionals to understand the real constraints and goals of people in eastern Kentucky prompted members to look close to home as well. In addition to "theoretical training" provided by paid "experts," or standardized materials, SSC members expressed the desire to speak with others who had gone through the same process, i.e. former SSC representative in counties that are "like our culture." They gathered surveys, questionnaires, and interviewing forms from their neighbors.

Fourth, SSC representatives were concerned that they take adequate time to ensure that they did a thorough job. "We don't need to be put in a rush," declared Mr. Adams, voicing the members' desire "to be their own man." At the outset, members did not know how much time it would take them to screen and evaluate applicants, but they were willing to do the job "until it's done."

Finally, the men discussed the question: if they were representatives, who were they representing? Certainly each brought the concerns of his own constituency - teachers, parents, principals, and the Board, but they also felt that there had been groups who had been entirely left out of the formal election. Cooks, bus drivers, central office staff, aides, and other staff were not formally represented. Most notably, the students did not have a particular person to represent their interests. In that, however, the men, were agreed: they all were there to put kids' needs first.

This idea was so central to their sense of mission that throughout these initial discussions, an organizing phrase emerged that became almost a mantra for the group. In the months that followed, it would emerge repeatedly in many different forms, but always with the same message: the selection decision had to be made "in the best interest of the children." The fact that this needed to be stated explicitly reflected the SSC's conviction that in the past and present the schools were not there first and foremost for children, but rather, as I was told from my first week in the field, to provide jobs for adults. All too often in this impoverished county, education had been an only incidental byproduct of the school system.

This phrase was not unique to the SSC, the underlying message, if not the exact wording, floated around the county in many other discussions about how the schools were run. There was a diffuse sense that the school system had become a bureaucracy that was unresponsive to the real needs of the average Hickory Countian. Although most acknowledged that it was impossible to return to a romanticized past of one-room schools and parental involvement, this nostalgic construction of the past served as the primary reference point for many. Bemoaned a senior citizen, "No body seems to care about children's education any more. . . get schools back like they used to be, when the children were important." We need to "understand that the only reason for school is children," argued a current teacher in one of the district's more remote schools. The public charge, whether to the Superintendent or the SSC members, to "put children's' interest before your own" was explicit and common.

Through the iterative process of articulating their common aspirations for the Committee, the five men created a greater level of trust and camaraderie between themselves. Over the course of the first meetings, it became clear that they were there to pursue common goals rather than to act vindictively for perceived past wrongs. Personal address shifted from the distantly polite "Mr. Adams," and "Mr. Newmann," to a first name basis. Attire became increasingly informal, business suits and ties were removed when coming to this table. After the meetings, on the walks down the brightly lit school corridors that connected the library to the exit, members exchanged stories of their own high school days at Central; the boys' basketball teams, hoarding all the cafeteria forks inside a locker, inspirational teachers who had passed on, local people who had gone on to positions of respect and accomplishment, and more. These shared positive memories reinforced the common bonds in the group, and helped them to reaffirm their convictions that the Hickory County schools deserved a responsible, accountable leader.

Negotiating Areas of Responsibility

Negotiating with the Board and Interim Superintendent

The SSC was not working in isolation during the initial phases of the screening process. Indeed, in addition to balancing power and authority within their own group, the men needed to create ways of working constructively with the Board and Interim Superintendent. With the leadership of Interim Superintendent Dr. Kennedy, the nature of school board operations and meetings was shifting, and with it concepts of the kinds of public leadership that was appropriate for this county. This section presents the changing context in which the SSC had to negotiate with both the Board and Interim Superintendent, and outlines the next layer of issues that came to the surface because of the way that SSC- Board relations proceeded.

The relationship between the Board and the SSC was tenuous and fraught with the potential for conflict from the beginning. One the one hand, Board members did not necessarily welcome the intrusion of the SSC into what had been one of the strongholds of their power. An opportunity to select a superintendent did not come often. Further, they were not, as Board member Bargo, eager to involve the general public, and thereby "have the process become political." On the other hand, Mr. Mills, another Board member, remarked, "I'm glad they took hiring and firing out of the School Board - there's less pressure on you." He noted that constituents kept a close eye on the actions of their representative and then voted, often as a large family group:

> Like "My people will [support you if you choose our candidate]. . ." Our minds are more clear. But, I probably won't run again. I don't like to make people mad, but you have to tell them the limits of the school board's power. I don't like to make people mad. Everyone in a small community everyone knows everyone else. If they get in trouble they think they should get out of it. And you need the votes - that's 50 family members. That's small town, county politics.

Thus he felt that people in hid subdistrict would blame or laud him for the final outcome. Because of this uncertainty about the kind of role the Board should - and actually wanted to - play, there was tension about how much autonomy they would allow the Screening Committee that, it was becoming increasingly apparent, intended to be a central player in the process.

During the first months of the new year, while the Committee was becoming more clear as to their agenda, the superintendency, and along with it the Board meetings, were undergoing significant changes. Interim Superintendent Kennedy took office shortly after the first of the year, and, according to his contract, was to serve up to 100 days, which would put his tenure just up to the proposed starting date for the new superintendent, July first. "I'm not here to make any major changes - our goal is to get through this year as good as we can," stated Dr. Kennedy. As a retired superintendent with decades of experience under his belt, he had been called in to help "line out" several other troubled districts while they sought a new superintendent. Dr. Kennedy did not intend to intervene or take sides in the SSC process, but instead, bring the process to a timely conclusion. He was experienced in working with the OEA and he was well respected by members of the Department of Education as well as generally well-liked as an effective facilitator by those in a neighboring county where he had also served as Interim Superintendent.

With his leadership, significant changes were happening at both the structural and symbolic levels. District policies and practices were revised in ways that facilitated greater public accountability, open records, and greater access to central office decision-makers. In addition, his leadership style and insistence that district educators take responsibility for their own actions in the absence of their former superintendent led to rethinking of the kind of "leader" who could lead the district into the future.

Under Mr. McAllister, School Board meetings had functioned as rituals of exclusion. The way decisions were made reinforced for the spectator that little of consequence happened at the public meetings, but that indeed, most important decisions had been made by the Superintendent beforehand, and were simply presented to the Board for their rubber-stamp. Further, Superintendent McAllister had served as the secretary to the Board, and decided what would be considered that evening or put off indefinitely. Gathered together over ham sandwiches in the cafeteria one October noon (before McAllister's resignation), several teachers had laughed at me when I stated that I planned to attend a Board meeting for the third month in a row. My regular lunch time companions warned that I would be bored, stating, "people know around here nothing much happens at Board meetings."

However, with the new year and with the leadership of Interim Superintendent Kennedy, the structure of the Board's public meetings was changing, and with it relations with both the press and the general public. Starting with the first meeting that Interim Superintendent Dr. Kennedy headed, both participants and spectators noticed significant changes. These were primarily due to the actions that Dr. Kennedy took to make the Board meetings much more publicly accessible. Although they were not particularly innovative or transformative actions, they were striking due to their previous absence. The regular dates of the meetings were now published in the newspaper and a directory of offices, including the Board meeting room, was installed in the Central Office. No longer did visitors have to go through the Superintendent's assistant in order to locate the person whom they sought. To the astonishment of the press, agendas were passed out to them beforehand, and a reasonable number of the thick packets were made available to those who attended the meetings. All school principals were "requested" to attend, but as the Spring went on, they had to increasingly compete for chairs with the Central Office staff, interested parents, teachers, business leaders, and others who came to see the "new Board" in action. Microphones were eventually installed so that people in the back could hear, and business reports were given by central office staff members in person rather than sent in writing, with the reporting person standing in the front of the group. As the Chair asked other Board members for a decision, e.g. whether to approve more efficient coal furnaces for the schools or to sponsor a high school field trip, members actually discussed the matter between themselves, joking, and stretching their fledgling wings.

In the Central Office itself, Dr. Kennedy's emphasis on professional autonomy among staff members and participatory management contributed to changes in the understandings of the symbolic nature of "leadership" as well. "We had to have Dr. Kennedy to realize what McAllister was," noted Mrs. Sanders, a long-time employee in the central office, "I didn't realize anything was wrong. We'd not known any different because the only boss we'd ever had was him." The span of time before the new person took office was a window of opportunity to think of past ways of relating and making decisions as problems, when before these seemed like inherent parts of this Appalachian context. Mrs. Sanders continued, "When you realize that something is a problem, if you realize it and he's still there what are you going to do? But if you realize it and he's gone, then it's possible."

Fundamental concepts about what kind of leadership would be possible, even desirable, in this county were also being reshaped. "Dr. Kennedy trusts us to let us do our jobs. It build self-esteem - to be treated as professionals, our opinions are valued and we have opportunity to voice what we think," added Mrs. Sanders. However, she noted that the added spheres of authority meant that they had to accept joint responsibility for the outcomes. They became stakeholders in decision-making rather than bystanders:

> It has been hard with Dr. Kennedy- he will let people make decisions. I've been given more authority now. I don't like to do hiring, but now we've been expected to be decision-makers. But if you don't like the person you hire you've no one to blame but yourself.

Even though the opportunity to take responsibility produced anxiety about what was expected, Mrs. Sanders went on, "I can't get enough. I feel like a kid in a candy store." In this persistently impoverished county, financial security was particularly important to Mr. McAllister, and he had maintained an especially tight reign on school expenditures. Mrs. Sanders expressed a growing awareness that perhaps staff had been complicit in the degree of control that Mr. McAllister had exercised. "Maybe it was his fault for not spend money on things, but I guess it was ours too for not asking. I guess we just assumed that he wouldn't approve it." Noting that under this new leader they explicitly had the discretion to spend money on professional books and supplies that could help them do their jobs, she commented that there was suddenly a flurry of activity, because "we're trying to play catch-up."

Several Board members also reported that they found the change of leadership empowering. Even those who avidly supported Mr. McAllister admitted that "he was the kind who had to have control." Explained Board member Mills:

> He was bitterly opposed to the community running the school, making decisions about buildings, curriculum. He was against change - even a little resistance. His views toward KERA *were* changing - through superintendent training and conferences. He was coming around. But probably that would not change - he had to be in control so that he knew what was and was not happening.

Mr. McAllister determined what was and what was not open for discussion at Board meeting. Board member Jones commented, "he did what he wanted and I don't know if he forgot or if he had a reason for not doing it." A relative newcomer to the Board, he continued, "I didn't challenge him because I didn't think I'd win." However, Jones sensed a change with Dr. Kennedy, adding, "We might have a chance now, not a win-lose situation. Maybe now we will be able to negotiate. In the past we've never been able to negotiate, we've never been able to win."

These interrelated changes in the Superintendency and the Board had direct implications for communications between them and the SSC. During conversations and the exchange of written notes between Chair Newmann and Dr. Kennedy, there was the understanding that decisions about financial resources, timelines, criteria, and a secretary for the SSC would be handled through proper channels, that is, at the Board meetings. This, it was hoped, would make the process of approving these things flow more smoothly. However, the expectation that things would be handled out in the open, instead of privately negotiated with the Superintendent, was also confusing, because the procedures for approving SSC requests wound up being set as the need for them arose.

At the same time that Board meetings were being made more public there was also increasing concern that the Board members, and thus, the district they represented, be seen as competent and civil, both by the public as well as the OEA. As a result, divisions between the SSC and the school board were to handled discreetly. Although Interim Superintendent Dr. Kennedy was characterized by the SSC as "open and helpful," he was also concerned that negotiations between the SSC and Board remain private, and not be debated in public at the Board meetings. Nevertheless, according to the law, the SSC had to have prior approval from the Board for funds to send out a survey, provide food at a public forum, and hire their own technical consultant. It was left to the precarious balancing act of the Board member of the SSC to repeatedly negotiate with Dr. Kennedy as well as his fellow Board members. His delicate task was to secure support for both the item at hand, as well as a commitment to include these items on the agenda. When, as sometimes happened anyway, they were left off, he had to bring them up at the meeting and call for a decisive vote. This was not always successful.

After numerous frustrated attempts to meet in person and to privately convince either the Board Chair or the Interim Superintendent to put an item on the Board agenda or to follow through on their request for information, SSC members found that it was more effective for them to put their requests in writing. This approach provided a running, and public accounting of the SSC's activities which gave them a record to refer back to when reiterating their requests. Despite the several concurrent efforts that the SSC made to get a sense of what the Board intended to do, members remained frustrated because it seemed that they were, at best, being ignored. In a SSC meeting in early January, members agreed that it seemed that communication was freely flowing from the SSC to the Board and Interim Superintendent, but not the other way around. Deciding to turn this situation to their advantage, SSC members resolved to proceed with the public forum, survey and other actions that they deemed necessary, whether they heard from the Board or not. In fact, as long as the Board remained did not publicly object, which they were unlikely to do given the OEA's increasingly close scrutiny and the local citizenry's attention, the SSC would just assume their approval.

Negotiating with the Board's Consultant

At the same time that the SSC was trying to find an acceptable balance of power with the Board and Superintendent, a fourth actor came into the process who would prove to have a catalyzing effect upon the entire screening process. However, it was certainly not the kind of catalyst that either this man, or the Board who hired him, originally foresaw.

Seizing upon the legal option open to them to make use of consultants other than the SSC, Board members decided in December to hire their own consultant to guide them in this new process. The Board agreed to invest a considerable sum, $3,500 (plus expenses), in an In-state Comprehensive Search Service with the Kentucky School Boards Association (KSBA). Through this contract, a KSBA consultant was to provide Board members with a four-hour seminar on planning, advertising, screening, interviewing, and hiring a new superintendent. Then, throughout the process itself, "KSBA will," as their brochure indicates, "assume responsibility for the majority of the work, all at the direction and approval of the board." Mr. Lawlor, the person appointed by the KSBA, was very knowledgeable about the standard screening process, having consulted in districts before KERA as well as since.

From the beginning, it was clear that Mr. Lawlor, "the Board's consultant," had little regard for either the necessity of including non-school board members or the importance of providing a substantial role for the Superintendent Screening Committee. To him, the matter of screening for a superintendent was simply a problem of how to make the process the most efficient, objective, quick, and simple for the citizens of the SSC who, he believed, did not have expertise comparable to his own. In Mr. Lawlor's mind, the Board, as the elected body for the district, was the lawful representative of the people, and any significant actions by another citizen's group, i.e. the SSC, were not only redundant, but potentially damaging to the status of the Board.

For those who sensed that the Board was being wary of intervening too much in the SSC's affairs, there was the worry that the KSBA consultant would step in on their behalf and run the show. SSC member Mr. Waters shared his concern at the beginning that having this expert on the Board's team would undermine the potential contribution of the SSC:

> I tell you, I was kind of irritably affected when they voted to get the School Board Association involved. They want a School Board person to run it, not the Screening Committee. Is the School Board going to ignore the SSC or not? I was hoping we'd have a bigger role!

In the months to follow, initial fears about Mr. Lawlor running the show would prove to be unfounded. While he did offer well-informed expertise about how, on a generic level, the process *could* operate, his inability, or unwillingness, to take into account local paradigms about how the process *did* operate led to repeated mistakes that effectively marginalized his contributions. Moreover, serious conflict between his conception of the ideal role for the SSC and the SSC's own sense of mission led to the SSC effectively striking off on their own. From their first meeting with the consultant on January ninth onward, the SSC decided that simply following the path laid out for them by Mr. Lawlor would not be "in the best interests of the children of Hickory County."

It is revealing to look at the areas of conflict that made the working relationships with the consultant problematic. Some of the tensions were a factor of Consultant Mr. Lawlor's personality and personal idiosyncrasies, others a result of his sponsoring agency's vested interest in maintaining the image of the Board as primary public representative. But they also reveal this "foreigner's" assumptions that in the selection process is simple, rational, dispassionate, and not of concern to the average person. None of these were the case in Hickory County, and "local folks" knew it.

Four areas of conflict emerged that Spring. Some were handled with politeness and perseverance on the part of all involved. Some broke down into outright antagonism. But each played a significant role in shaping how the final recommendations were made to the Board. They reinforced SSC members' convictions that they shared a stake in the success of the SSC process itself. And in that way, they were pivotal in shaping local perceptions of the contributions made by the men on the Screening Committee.

First, there was a fundamental difference in perceptions about what kind of contribution the SSC should make to the process. Mr. Lawlor felt strongly that the SSC need only "stick to the basics," that is, screen applicants and then make a recommendation of five names, in no order, to the board. In his first private meeting with Mr. Newmann, Mr. Lawlor approached the Chair with reassurances that the process would not require too much of an effort, and that he has already established "recommendations for the committee to do." In a friendly gesture, Mr. Lawlor offered his guidance, e.g. in doing background checks, to the supposedly naive and inexperienced SSC. Trying to convey that the SSC would not have to act independently, Mr. Lawlor generously offered, "my plan is to do it alongside y'all," all too obviously incorporating the Appalachian "y'all" into his statement, an item that otherwise was not normal in his speech.

Mr. Lawlor was both perplexed and frustrated by the resistance that he met in Mr. Newmann's assertion that the SSC planned to do considerably more than just a minimalist job. A large part of Mr. Lawlor's confusion was his assumption that he had been brought into this search because of his consulting expertise derived from assisting in other searches. He expressed confusion as to why the SSC would undertake "unnecessary" work that he was prepared to do. To him, resistance to his suggestions did not indicate that they were mismatched to the local context or substantially flawed in any way, but that instead, for some reason beyond his desire to know, the SSC seemed to distrust his intentions from the beginning. Mr. Lawlor seemed stuck in a line of argument meant to convince Mr. Newmann that if he only relaxed and followed the consultant's lead everything would turn out fine. He repeatedly asserted that "it's always been done in other districts that I worked with," and "every committee I've worked with has adopted this process." However, instead of being appeased, Mr. Newmann retorted, this was not just any committee, nor was it, to Hickory Countians, just another search.

That evening at the regular SSC meeting, the men discussed Mr. Lawlor's clear desire to minimize their role. They expressed little confidence in Mr. Lawlor. Angered at the threat to their plans to go ahead and survey the public, SSC member Mr. Broughton began the following dialogue:

> If we listen to this guy's baloney, we could all be back home watching TV or listening to the radio or something. I think if we do that [follow the Consultant's plan and not talk to stakeholders], that we're not doing what the people that elected us to do want. We're shortchanging them."
>
> Mr. Adams: They've put their confidence in us!
>
> Mr. Broughton: Irregardless of what the final decision is, if we do our best, do our part to get everybody included, and look at all the angles. . . No one of us could come up with all the possible criteria or angles. That's why we all have to put our heads together and work on it.

Thus a result of this initial encounter and then subsequent ones in which the same conversations were essentially repeated, was that SSC representatives felt the consultant was out of touch with the needs of the local district and out of sync with what they aimed to do. They felt that parents and district employees had put their trust in them. The SSC members felt that they had been called to represent the local people in their search for a Superintendent best suited to their own particular local needs.

Second, establishing - and sticking to - a timeline for action was one of the initial and most enduring areas of conflict. The Board is responsible for establishing a timeline for action, and then informing the SSC of the date on which recommendations should be received. The Hickory Board abdicated responsibility for drafting up the timeline to Mr. Lawlor.

The consultant's timeline set a three-month outline for the process that would have a final point the March 27 Board Meeting when the new Superintendent would be formally hired. Although even in the KSBA booklet a six month timeline is offered as a model, Mr. Lawlor deemed this compressed version, "adequate and generous time to do it," based on the previous searches that he had guided. Another belief embodied in the timeline was Mr. Lawlor's experience that the closer that the Hickory County Board got to the June 30 contract hiring deadline, the greater the number of qualified candidates who would have accepted other offers. However, in drawing upon his experience in general, Mr. Lawlor had constructed a timeline that did not respect dates already set by the Board; the timeline was organized around specific dates for Board and SSC meetings which did not even correspond to the actual Hickory Board's meeting dates.

Another assumption imbedded in the timeline was that the KSBA consultant believed that the SSC would neither need nor want to meet before the middle of February (when applications were received). Needless to say, this peripheral role did not sit will with members of the Committee, who had already been actively meeting since early December. In a face-to-face discussion between the consultant and the SSC chair, Mr. Newmann tried to preempt further exclusion of the SSC from decisions that directly concerned them. Confused as to why the Chair was agitated about the timeline, the consultant reassured the him that he would "write each of them a letter letting them know when they need to meet." Mr. Lawlor was unsettled to learn that the SSC already had begun substantial planing of both a public forum and a large survey, not to mention that they had been meeting without his knowledge for over a month. Mr. Newmann pressed the point of "your not consulting about meeting with the committee and asking if this is an appropriate timeline, if we felt" this was in line with our goals. He stressed his fellows' desires to be taken seriously as equal partners in the screening process. He noted that for example, Mr. Lawlor had set Tuesdays, beginning on Valentine's Day, as the time when he would be willing to meet with the SSC to get them going. This was unacceptable, the Chair explained, because, "several of our members are basketball coaches - that's why we have meetings on Monday nights. That's why we have *been meeting* on Mondays."

The tension between the consultant and the SSC's representative built up in the following exchange in which concerns about the role of the SSC were exacerbated by concerns about the proposed timeline. Mr. Lawlor insisted that before the Board gave the SSC the applicants' folders, "There's nothing to do." Answering some of Mr. Newmann's stained yet polite requests that they be included in setting meeting dates in the future, Mr. Lawlor offered that when the SSC was legally required to be convened, he would "meet with the SSC each time we meet, according to whatever schedule you adopt (after the applicants come in)." Wishing to extract an explicit statement from the consultant as to his feelings about the actual importance of the SSC, the Chair countered, "Are you telling me that the meetings that we're having are not important?" "I'm not saying anything," retorted the Mr. Lawlor, "There's not really anything to do before you have applicants."

In later conversations, still surprised at the SSC's continued resistance to simply accept the externally-mandated schedule, Mr. Lawlor relented, "It is a *recommended* schedule." In point of fact, the SSC progressed as they felt appropriate, the Board took no steps to push them, and, for the next few months, Mr. Lawlor dropped the point. However, the press had reported Mr. Lawlor's timeline and the idea that a decision was to be made by the end of March had become fixed in the public eye. SSC members found themselves repeatedly explaining to the Board's Consultant, the Interim Superintendent, or even just justifying to themselves, why they needed more time than originally allocated. Invariably, the reasoning was that they needed the time to do the job so that they could be satisfied that they had done their best: "We are not doing this to drag it out, but are doing it to be more efficient. We could make a better decision."

Mr. Lawlor also stated that he sensed a publicly-noticeable division growing between the SSC, the Board and himself. He warned that this was undesirable because some applicants might withdraw their application if they sensed that they could be coming into a district that was divided. Again, discussing the interaction with Mr. Lawlor, at their SSC meeting members loudly protested that this was the *least* kind of division that a candidate would have to worry about and that it he could not deal with this - other conflicts in the county were much greater - he ought to forget it.

Third, settling on the criteria for selecting the candidates was a multi-phase process that also presented the potential for conflict with the Board as well as with the KSBA consultant. The matter of deciding how to actually define criteria for a leader who would "put the needs of our children first" was linked to deciding whose priorities for the district should prevail and whose concept of the best leader would gain the Board's approval.

Again, according to KSBA guidelines, the Board was to work with their consultant to establish criteria and then pass these on to the SSC. Mr. Lawlor intended to meet with stakeholders and make:

> recommendations from the meetings to the Board and that's what they'll consider . . . not of a limiting nature, there might be some preferences that come out of a consensus from these meetings.

Concerned that Mr. Newmann might react too strongly to the recommended criteria, he reassured him, "Don't get too excited about it. Maybe one would be what a minimum criteria is." Further, Lawlor proposed that the charge "could come to the committee by writing or fax;" the SSC need not even attend that Board meeting. "There is no reason for the SSC to come," Mr. Lawlor asserted. To Newmann's look of utter disbelief, he issued the rejoinder, "Anybody would be welcome, but it's not necessary [for the SSC members to come]."

The process by which the KSBA Consultant arrived at the criteria was itself a source of community friction. Instead of leading to greater public confidence in the job being done by the consultant, it contributed to the sentiment that the men of the SSC were the only real representatives or advocates for the average district employee.

On Thursday, January 5th, in the late afternoon, the KSBA consultant called and asked the Superintendent's assistant to set up meetings on the following Monday. He wanted 30 minutes with each Board member and hour-long group sessions with the principals, central office staff, and teachers. On Friday, a rainstorm broke loose that shut down the county schools. So, in effect, many people did not receive the news until Monday.

Participants reported that Mr. Lawlor's meetings with all Board members, 12 Central office people and all but one of the principals went as planned. The criteria that Mr. Lawlor had brought along were generally in concert with the needs perceived by those he interviewed. In later conversations with me, however, several participants conveyed the sense that the meetings had been largely symbolic; from previous searches Mr. Lawlor already knew which criteria he would probably recommend before they even met.

The meeting with district teachers did not go nearly as well, and quickly became an item of community gossip about the lack of respect that the "Frankfort guy hired by the Board" showed regarding local needs. The one opportunity that teachers had for direct interaction with the Board's consultant was a source of irritation and suspicion of Board motives among school district employees. Several elements of how the meeting was called and run contributed to the resulting frustrations. The short notice, the location of the meeting (Central High's library), the early afternoon time slot that fit the needs of the consultant but was ill-suited to the actual work day of the teachers, and a general skepticism that the Board's consultant would actually listen, all contributed to the small turn-out. Only 13 teachers came, almost half of whom were from Central's large teaching staff. The teacher member of the SSC who was from Central was also present. Several teachers stated informally that they represented their school or at least several other teachers who did not come; they were there in part to check out the Consultant as much as he was there to hear from them. The interactions at the teachers' meeting illustrates several problematic aspects that would, ironically, have lasting - and beneficial - consequences for district employee's confidence in the Screening Committee.

One of the underlying goals of these meetings was to do public relations work for the new process of selecting the next leader under KERA. In the first part of the meeting, Mr. Lawlor took the opportunity to dispel myths and explain to a larger constituency just how the actual process of screening and then selecting a superintendent now worked. He also tried to calm teachers' criticism that his was just a token position by a Board that already knew who they were going to pick. Several times, Mr. Lawlor maintained that simply "the fact that the Board had gone through the trouble and expense of hiring a consultant indicates that they do not already have a candidate in mind." Ignoring the teachers who rolled their eyes at this assertion, he continued, that, in addition, his driving two hours to meet with them "should be adequate to reassure the public that this is an open search."

However, the KSBA consultant's only perfunctory attention to the ideas and concerns expressed by the teachers only served to convince those present that he indeed was not interested in their particular priorities. He had come with a ready-made list and proceeded to read off those criteria, asking for agreement and comments as he went. A more enthusiastic exchange followed during which he asked for additional ideas.

However, the Consultant continued to disregard the teachers' main creative suggestion, that candidates be asked to express themselves in writing. At the end of the hour, his frank statement that he "would not include" this suggestion was justified not so much by the logistical difficulties this might present, but by his claim that it was not "necessary," and he "had never known it to be done in other searches that he had done." Teachers, even those who had not been for that particular suggestion, shifted gears and now rallied to criticize this reasoning, angered by the implication that they did not know what they really needed. The teachers declared that they felt that the meeting had been a farce. They had come for an hour to a meeting supposedly set up to gather their recommendations and still he would not forward what *now* the majority of them considered to be "their" major recommendation.

Feeling betrayed by the consultant, the teachers turned to the SSC teacher representative present and chanted, "Richard, Richard he's our man!" Exasperated, the Consultant politely suggested that their suggestions could be passed on to the Screening Committee. Two teachers in the back of the group exclaimed in agreement, "They can decide if *they* want to use it, that's the group *we* put in charge!" At the SSC meeting that night, members discussed the many events of that day, including the suggestion that this rally around one of their members had strengthened the SSC's position as the only true advocate for teachers and staff. Now the teachers had a stake in the SSC's success too.

Mr. Lawlor composed his list of criteria, and sent it to Interim Superintendent Dr. Kennedy. Three days before the Board meeting when they were to be approved, Dr. Kennedy forwarded the list on to the SSC. They read over the list, added ideas that had been floating around their meetings, and sent out the revised list with letters individually addressed to the members of the Board. The text of the letters read:

> After reviewing the superintendent criteria sent to the Board by Mr. Lawlor, we would like to make some suggestions to enhance it. After several discussions, we have added or amended several criteria to reflect our concerns and ideas. These items are underlined in the text. We offer these in the spirit of cooperation for your consideration at the February ninth Board meeting. We see these as preliminary criteria that will be further refined through our use of public surveys and public forums. However, we anticipate that for now they will provide the basis for a fruitful initial discussion about the ideal superintendent candidate. We look forward to cooperating further with Board members in our common search for the best new superintendent for Hickory County.

At the February Board meeting, after a reminder by the SSC Board member to address the matter, the Board accepted the revised criteria as the ones that it would recommend to the SSC. In effect, by preapproving the list, the SSC had written their own charge.

The fourth area of conflict was disagreement between Mr. Lawlor and the SSC over Lawlor's beliefs that it was not important, not helpful, and even potentially dangerous to stir up public involvement in the selection process. In another interaction with Mr. Newmann, the consultant and SSC chair were at odds about who the SSC felt they were there to serve. Mr. Lawlor was frustrated by Mr. Newmann's lack of respect for and deference to the way that the criteria had been generated and Mr. Newmann's insistence that still more people needed to be brought into the process. Later, recounting the exchange to his fellow SSC members, Mr. Newmann recalled:

> I told Mr. Lawlor time and time again, and I said, "we're taking this thing seriously." We want everyone included. And he said, '*Who* are you concerned about?' And I said, "We're concerned about what's best for the kids in the county." So, he thought we had some kind of agenda maybe by being persistent and wanting to keep it open, and work with the Board and the other groups that are out there. And I made a point to say, "Look, you had 13 teachers there, is that going to be your criteria for selecting the Superintendent in this county?' Plenty of fun, if you want to call it that!

Mr. Lawlor's answer had been that the average district employee was not concerned or informed enough to make a serious contribution to discussions about selection criteria. To him, the level of participation reflected the inherent lack of concern. Stating that such meetings are hardly worth the effort needed for him to come down and conduct them, Mr. Lawlor had added, "The number of teachers who showed up made my point about the amount of participation you get.

A second difference between the SSC and the consultant's paradigms about grassroots outreach was Mr. Lawlor's stated belief that asking average people to get directly involved undermines the representative system embodied by the Board as well as the SSC. Mr. Lawlor likened such democratic participation to the "ridiculous idea" of everyone having direct input into the state budget process, commenting that:

> The man on the street (whether a parent or a superintendent) doesn't have a role in determining how the budget is set, it is necessary, they have to work through their elected representative. . . .you can't let everybody vote on it, you can't run the government on -- .

Mr. Newmann told his SSC colleagues that he had countered:

> It is not the same thing, we're talking about home, right down here in Hickory County. The people are more directly affected by the schools than they are by the state-wide budget process.

Further, the SSC members noted, there were those stakeholders who did not have a designated representative to work through. To Mr. Lawlor's question, "who *are* you serving?" the five representatives would have answered with "The kids! And those with no representation (the central office and classified staff)."

A third point of contention was Lawlor's assertion that the average person lacks the requisite knowledge to make an informed decision. Whether referring to interviews on the street, polls in a survey or invitations to a public forum, Lawlor asked, "What are you going to ask 'em and what are they going to say that's going to be helpful?" Mr. Lawlor's disdain for the possible contribution of non-experts, citizens and parents was commented on at the SSC meetings repeatedly. Mr. Adams, recounting his interpretation of Mr. Lawlor's remarks, said angrily, "what he said is that us poor, old working folks out here don't know diddly about what is going on."

A fourth issue was Mr. Lawlor's desire to avoid encouraging members of the general public to share their opinions, whether in public forums or through surveys. In an ironically parallel way to teachers' comments about the kinds of parents who joined the SBC, Lawlor remarked, "The wrong kinds of people are attracted to forums." In a later discussion with SSC members he added that in the ones he's seen, "the forums had more people there related to the search than [who cared] in the general population." He added:

> If you have surveys or community forums there's a small group of people who respond, a self-selected group of people who respond. And then try to draw conclusions from that . . .It's useless in a practical sense.

Mr. Lawlor had also yet to see a public survey that he felt was worthwhile. Seizing upon the opportunity to once again criticize the Kentucky Education Association whose guide to the screening process encouraged surveys, he noted that "the KEA did a survey in the Frankfort search - it was worse than useless." He added, "it was a poor design, and very low numbers were returned . . . It wasn't handled well, but I think it's an inherent problem with them." Asked by the Hickory SSC, "Would you recommend results of surveys or public forums or would they be discounted?" Mr. Lawlor, looking distinctively ill at ease, smirked, looked at the wall, shied away from direct visual contact, and then stated, "When you're finished you still don't have anything. I've done all those and seen 'em done. They don't yield anything and there's a danger if you take them too seriously."

However, Mr. Lawlor did concede that in certain instances:

> There are some occasions when they [surveys and forums] have some value. A community with deep factionalism with group or groups causing problems - do it to make them feel included.

In such situations, he continued, "The only use . . . is showing the flag of trying to be inclusive, but it's not useful." SSC members responded that they felt that the current condition in Hickory County was indeed one of division and considerable lack of unconditional faith in elected leaders. They reasserted their desire to go ahead and do both surveys and a forum, with or without the consultant's blessing. Relenting, Mr. Lawlor tried to seem unconcerned. "It's not useful in a practical sense. . . I'm not trying to discourage you, I'm not trying to discourage you, but if it were free. . . " and finally, "It's not important to me if you do a survey!"

Once again, the repeated interactions with the Board's consultant and his assumptions about the "ideal" process provoked the SSC to address their own motivations and hopes for the SSC process in their county. While taking into account Mr. Lawlor's experiences that suggested that there usually was not an overwhelming public response, they still hoped to be able to generate public enthusiasm and participation in this screening process. The men saw proactively reaching out to the previously disenfranchised as central to their purpose in serving on the SSC. The following comments were part of the dialogue in response to Mr. Lawlor's claims that involving people was unnecessary:

> Mr. Adams: If we don't take a survey of the teachers and are trying to do the best job we can . . . We're here to serve the people who put us in there!
>
> Mr. Newmann: The point of KERA is to increase inclusivity . . .
>
> Mr. Waters:. . . not represent all people, all people versus 2% . . . what they have to say is important, not just for appearances' sake, but because it is important.
>
> Mr. Newmann: Yeah, not for perception's sake, but because they are part of the game, they're part of the whole process."
>
> Mr. Smith: There have to be other ways to reach people and we're going to find them
>
> Mr. Broughton: We're serious about it.
>
> Mr. Smith: We want people to be included, not for people to feel excluded.

The cumulative effect of dialogues like this was a change in the tenor of meetings. The men more explicitly expressed the desire to work independently, and if necessary, in opposition to the Board's consultant. The fact that the Board had largely retreated from more than an confirming role, neither blocking SSC plans nor pressuring them to complete the process quickly, served to maintain a working space during March and April that the SSC filled with a survey, review of applications, a public forum, and committee meetings.

Key actions taken by the SSC

Opposition by the Board's consultant served to galvanize SSC members' resolve to make the process public and then to hold the Board accountable for seriously considering their recommendations. From the beginning, members were concerned that the public have opportunities for input. They especially wanted to reach out to those who worked in the school district, including the classified staff , but who had no formal representation on the SSC. They felt that by being included, or at least being given the opportunity to be included, people would feel that they had a greater degree of ownership over both the process as well as the final person chosen. They would have a stake in the process too. Building a base of involvement was important because whoever was to take over the district would need a great deal of support if substantial change were to be sustained in each school.

In addition, the men wanted to find out firsthand what exactly how Hickory Countians defined actions and traits that would serve "the best interest of the children." By operationalizing this phrase into discrete parts that could be turned into interview questions, the men hoped to make their screening process more closely reflect the actual concerns, hopes, and perspectives of the rural Appalachian people this superintendent would lead. In addition, as they later found, being able to state that they had actually used the "people's criteria" in their screening, cast them in a different light than the Board, who many assumed would use their own, undisclosed criteria. Knowing what "the people" wanted gave them power as legitimate representatives.

Six key sets of actions were taken during the February, March and April. In chronological order, the actions were; posting the job announcement, writing and distributing a survey of all district employees, hosting a public forum., analyzing the results, interviewing, and, finally, presenting the final report and recommendations to the Board. This section presents a brief description of the logistics of these actions, as well as the underlying paradigms and issues that were highlighted as the SSC debated and then implemented them.

The Position Announcement

Mr. Lawlor posted the Hickory County opening in the KSBA's "Educational Vacancies" bulletin, which was the standard place that a job seeker would consult. However, the SSC felt that this was not adequate. First, they were concerned that not enough good candidates would see it. The SSC wanted to make sure that there were more than five candidates attracted to apply for this job in a relatively remote county. Otherwise, if they were instructed to provide a final list of five candidates, "we wouldn't have to do anything."

Their second concern grew out of their belief that they should conduct a search that was not confined to the local area. Not only would a state-wide search be more likely to generate more candidates, the SSC wanted to cultivate the sense that it had been a fair, open search not limited *de facto* the ready pool of local successors. The importance of being perceived as responsive was a frequent topic of conversation. Believing that local people wanted to know that the SSC had looked hard for the best candidate, Mr. Broughton remarked, "we need to be seen as responsive" and, Mr. Smith added, the search will "be more successful if the public supports it." SSC members were concerned that the position be advertised as openly as possible. "It should be out there for the public, because this," stated the chair, waving the KSBA bulletin in the air, "is not the public. This is a specialized group." Noting that many local business people and others received the Lexington paper, Mr. Smith felt "the public's perception would be best served if it were, you know - when it says open here-- ," referring to the OEA report on the table, "the public would be better satisfied if it was in the Lexington paper." SSC members were convinced that a responsible state-wide search meant active recruiting of applicants through advertisements in both the Lexington and Louisville newspapers, as these served as state-wide news forums, and were not simply limited to metropolitan-related reports.

However, in the law the SSC does not have the authority to place the ads. It was the domain of the Board (via the consultant if they chose to delegate). Also, only the Board could authorize the funds needed to place the ads. So, several SSC members renewed their personal requests to the Interim Superintendent to submit the ad in these papers. The ad was eventually placed in the Lexington paper just in time for the closing deadline. The only criteria given in the official job listing was "Knowledge of KERA strongly preferred."

While waiting for the Valentine's Day application deadline, the five men eagerly discussed the applicants who, they hoped, were busy preparing their background materials. In their lively discussions, the men expressed the assumption that information networks in other places in the state operated much like the highly efficient local networks. They believed, at least in their optimistic moods, that others would find the superintendent's race in this small Appalachian county as big news as they did. They believed that news of this opening would spread throughout the state by word of mouth, just like local news networks that disperse "like a forest fire - it doesn't take long for word to spread."

The Survey

Although it meant pushing back the Consultant's timeline, the members of the SSC were even more determined after Mr. Lawlor's fateful meeting with the teachers to provide a substantial means or people to safely and effectively voice their ideas. Screening committee members wanted to provide a means for all district employees to give input, especially those who had been excluded from meetings with Mr. Lawlor, i.e. cooks, bus drivers, and classified staff. The SSC felt that all employees had a stake in who their new leader was to be. Also, they noted, the classified staff were more likely to be "more average people" who come from all corners of the county, and could contribute potentially different perspectives. As Mr. Newmann announced at the public forum:

> if a multitude of people feel a certain way, and it keeps popping up, then we would definitely address those concerns - no matter if they came from a janitor, or a teacher, or a central office person. Because as I explained to Mr. Lawlor, all these groups are important to us, not just because they're saying that, but because they're part of it, they're here.

The process of deciding on questions and devising a user-friendly format took several weeks' worth of meetings. Building upon the numerous examples from their dossiers, my expertise in survey design, and incorporating elements of their own, they completed a succinct, two-page survey. A copy of this survey is included in the Appendix. I took advantage of this opportunity to incorporate some of my own questions (that overlapped sufficiently with their own interests) into this survey that was going to be mailed, at no expense to me, to all district employees. I was more than glad to do the leg work of collecting employee names and addresses (there was no one collective list in the central office), produce the final product, and run them through the postage machine.

The men explicitly discussed the actions that they should take in order to increase respondents' faith that their responses would be held confidential, both during the process and after the superintendent was chosen. Extensive gossip about the process had been a prominent - if not unexpected - feature of the early stages of the search. In fact, concern about gossip prompted the SSC to send a memo to the Interim Superintendent requesting that he restrain the central office staff from talking openly about the supposedly confidential applications as they were received at the Board.

Although principals were personally asked to encourage their staff people to fill out the surveys, SSC members did not wish for them to be done at faculty meetings "with their colleagues sittin' 'round." In order to avoid any undue interference or coercion by peers or superiors, the survey was mailed directly to the homes of all 723 district employees. The end results was that the surveys were sent out in an unmistakable, bright goldenrod envelope on which was printed on the upper right hand corner, "The Superintendent Screening Committee, [Central Office address]," and their motto, *"Working for the children of Hickory County."*

Surveys were printed on six colors of special bond paper so that surveys could not be easily duplicated and "ballot boxes packed." In addition, this format enabled me to identify which answers belonged to which constituent group, a matter that, in the end, turned out to be important for my research but irrelevant for their own project. After long discussions, members decided that numbering each of the surveys, while it would help in tracking them, would make respondents uneasy. This plan was therefore abandoned.

To encourage response, a return envelope was included which bore the address of Chair Mr. Newmann at Central. Members had decided that it would be easier to monitor what happened to the surveys if they came directly to Central High's small main office than if they went to the district central office. Returned surveys were kept in a special box and as secretary I counted and bundled them daily. The surveys are now in my possession, so that nothing that anyone wrote can surface and be used against them.

The SSC also wanted to involve teens, to demonstrate in their actions that they valued them as thoughtful, young adult members of their communities. Thus, the secretary was commissioned to draw a random sample of students from the county's high schools and to administer the survey to these students. I surveyed 104 students out of a possible 120. All but two of the non-participants were absent that day.

The SSC also deemed reaching out to parents and citizens important. Members decided to have surveys available at the central office, the schools, and through the PTA/PTOs that would be meeting during that window of time. "We're looking to give [the public] as many opportunities as we can, without leaving it open clear till the end of the year," summed up Mr. Broughton. Convening a special meeting of PTA/PTO presidents to let them know how they could play a role in disseminating surveys was also agreed upon as important, for "if we don't do anything else, we should at least do that much." However, no formal meeting was ever hosted by the SSC. Instead, as a result, those few parents and community members who got surveys did so on their own initiative.

The Public Forum

There were several reasons why the SSC believed that it was necessary, perhaps even judicious, to host a public forum that offered diverse people the opportunity of share their views. First, they wanted to provide different kinds of opportunities for people to become part of the official discourse, not just alternative gossip networks, about the screening process. Not every one would have a chance to fill out a survey, and they wanted to hear from others who had something to share.

Second, Mr. Waters expressed considerable concern that many people would not believe or heed the results of a written survey. This was one of the few references between the men to an element of the Central High principal selection that had caused sore feelings the past summer. Acknowledging Mr. Smith's desire to make sure that similar problems were avoided, the SSC gladly incorporated this concern in to the way that they organized the forum. Believing that participants would be more likely to believe their peers than a report issued by the SSC, the men wanted to find ways of empowering all kinds of people speak their minds. People would be encouraged to speak, but for those who did not wish to do so, their actual written comments could be compiled and read aloud at the public forum In this way, a consensus that they would avoid what had been a divisive aspect of past interactions, i.e. silencing through aggregation and the writing an official account of public opinion, served as a bridge to unite the men in their new joint endeavor. They were creating their own, new means of generating and organizing knowledge.

The five men recognized the risks that they were taking by opening up their process and opening up themselves to public scrutiny and critique. Instead of clarifying the screening process, it might lead to greater confusion, even dissent. A central office educator who felt that letting people speak their minds would not be a good idea, said to me as I was posting flyers in the district office, "An open forum will encourage them. . . people will get upset because somebody said whatever."

At the very beginning of discussions about the forum, members expressed an interest in having a forum at sites "other than school buildings" so that people shy of the schools would feel more confident in coming. However, for matters of convenience as well as its Central location, Central High was chosen as the site for the single public forum held.

All those who had received a survey were notified of the Forum. On the bottom of the survey, there was a special note that read:

> There will be an opportunity for everyone who has additional input - whether a district employee or not - to share their views at the public forum to be held on Monday, February 20 at 7 p.m. at Central High's library. Please join us there!

But members did not want district employees, who had the opportunity to each fill out a survey, to dominate the forum.

They wanted a more diverse crowd and were concerned that the forum be adequately advertised to the public at large. As the forum took place at the height of the basketball season, several SSC members suggested, only half joking, that it be announced at half-time of the Central's boys' basketball game, "as people do show up for those" school events if for no other school activity. At a frustrating point in the planning process when disappointment with the level of public participation had mounted, a member suggested that the forum actually *be held* at half time, in order to take advantage of the relatively large crowd (350 and up) that would "come down out of the hollows for basketball."

Advertisement of the forum was extensive. Another school staff member and I distributed nearly 200 posters to the far reaches of the county, posting them in community gathering places, e.g. gas- and food marts, post offices, grocery stores, florists, the welfare office, schools, the public health center, the utility office, the bus garage, the court house, the newspaper office, the cable company, the Family Resource/Youth Service Centers and on the community bulletin boards of Hardees and the other fast food places where senior citizens friends meet regularly for breakfast and

Thursday night gatherings. Announcements about the forum were sent to be read at all schools. Mr. Newmann was interviewed on the radio.

There was considerable speculation as to what kind of turn out the SSC would be able to generate for "their" forum. Sitting in the teacher's lounge with my afternoon Coke, trying to rouse myself from the stultifying heat generated by the coal heaters that day, I asked the teachers whether they planned to attend or not. Most said that they would not be coming. Some felt that it would be a waste of time, a reason that they did not wish to elaborate upon. Some felt that they had completed what they had to say on their survey. But, even those who had shown some confidence in the survey were still unsure how much of a difference their participation would even make. Stated the senior Mrs. McAllister, a staff member who did not plan on going to the Forum, "There are probably 50 people with something to say, but not 50 people who think that what they have to say will be listened to, make a difference."

Surprisingly, though, that evening at the forum, in addition to four members of the committee and the secretary, thirty-seven people including two additional Board members were present. Twenty-four were employees of the district and 13 were not. The SSC began by introducing themselves and introducing the screening process to the many who had no firm idea of what they should expect from this novel procedure. Mr. Newmann recapped that the committee representatives have been working hard since December 5 and all meetings have been open up to this point. Fourteen hours of meaningful discussions culminated in the survey that he held up to show participants. Fifteen combined hours were logged in putting the survey together and getting it mailed out. He encouraged parents and community members to pick up their own survey at the back of the room when they leave. He also explained, "the criteria you give us in the surveys will be the backbone of the questions we ask in the interviews."

He also answered questions such as the perplexed parent's query, "If [SSC] does all this work, what makes the Board more qualified than the Screening Committee?" Responding that the law gives the Board the right to make the final decision, the parent participants warned the three Board members present that they should do their own interviews and take the SSC's recommendations seriously.

Only five people initially indicated that they would, or probably would, like to speak, although more did speak as the evening progressed. Two letters were read aloud by Chair Mr. Newmann; both authors were present and were acknowledged. Mrs. Collins, one of the authors of a pointed and assertive letter, told me later that she was confident of her ideas, but she just did not think that she was a good public speaker.

Analysis of the Results

Preparing an analysis of the surveys and documenting the concerns expressed at the forum was a job that the five men felt very under prepared to do. Although they recognized that I could offer them expertise, they decided that in addition to my services they would like to hire their own consultant, one with experience in this kind of process, to turn their data into interview questions. They quickly dismissed Mr. Lawlor as unsupportive, but also realized that the decision to hire an external resource person to help analyze the survey results was again contingent upon the Board releasing funds to the SSC. By law, the SSC could not obligate the Board to pay for screening expenses, including those incurred by hiring a consultant or bringing in candidates for interviews. However, with the support of Interim Superintendent Dr. Kennedy, an experienced person was located and hired for a couple of sessions.

In preparation for their meetings with Dr. Eulen, I designed a survey analysis rubric and sat down with each man, or with pairs of them, and led them through the coding and manual data collection process. These afternoons, evenings, and planning periods were some of the most enjoyable times that I spent with the SSC. Enjoying the sense that they were united in their determination to use the opinions of every one of the survey respondents and public survey participants, the stakeholders shared written comments from the surveys, unusual responses, emergent trends, unusual quotes, and other items that they found interesting and/or provocative. Sitting over pizza or carry-out Chinese food (from the one Asian-American restaurant in the area), we came up with a list of priorities, key traits, and specific concerns that they wanted to build into their interviews.

The men enjoyed a productive working relationship with Dr. Eulen, who they considered there to help them. With his guidance in reformulating ideas into a workable form they were able to turn the public data set into 40 questions. Some were wide open, e.g. "Why do you want to be superintendent of Hickory County?" Some were based around scenarios that people had repeatedly mentioned as disturbing, e.g. "You have been told by the high school principal that ten different high school students have told him/her a teacher is sexually involved with a seventeen- year-old high school student. The principal told you first. What would you do?" Others were concerned about his knowledge and critical interpretations of KERA, e.g. "Assessment of student performance seems to be the biggest issue surrounding KERA. Why is assessment an issue?" Additional questions were of a general nature that tapped understanding of the complexities of running this particular Appalachian district, "We continue to have politics used unproductively in Hickory County schools. What would you do to decrease the negative impact of politics?" or "How would you avoid having a double standard for judging your conduct and that of your employees?" Another set probed he candidates willingness to engage in the kind of participatory decision-making and effective delegation of responsibility that both the SSC and district employees saw modeled by Dr. Kennedy, e.g. "How would you apply shared decision making within the central office?" and "How do you feel about school-based decision making?"

Dr. Eulen also helped the SSC design a scoring sheet that would generate a final score for each person interviewed. Different subjects were weighted differently, with those the SSC deemed more central and critical to the success of the superintendent receiving more points.

The Interviews

Mr. Lawlor handed over sixteen thick application folders to the SSC in mid-February. Acknowledging his greater expertise, the SSC worked with Mr. Lawlor to design instruments and background check forms that would help them assess the written materials and then conduct a series of reference checks. These reviews and phone calls were done individually; the men then met and exchanged information and, together, narrowed the pool.

When the final list had been cut down to 7 they felt that it was time to invite the finalists down for interviews. Four were local. They could not offer those candidates from further away any compensation for their travel.

Interviews were conducted in the newly remodeled School Board room in the central office. Although there were old tables in the basement available for use, and one good, medium sized table in the room, the men decided to sit at the large, stuffed Board chairs and desk units up on the fixed riser. These were arranged in a flattened C-shape. The candidate then was to be seated on a good chair at the nice-looking medium table, facing the Board chairs. This arrangement enabled interviewers to sit comfortably for two or three interviews per night, each lasting one to two hours apiece. However, a significant disadvantage, as two candidates later confided angrily, was that interviewees were forced to look up to the SSC when they answered questions. Furthermore, in a rural county marked by neighborliness and (public) collegiality, the setting seemed almost pompous, and the formal furniture did not seem befitting to the lowly SSC since they did not make the final decision. (These were particularly seen in contrast to the interviews that were conducted later by the Board which were done gathered around several tables drawn together, with the candidate on an equal plane with his interviewers.)

Each person was greeted, first in the foyer by the secretary (a neutral person) and then by each member of the committee. The female secretary played hostess and made sure that water and soft drinks were available for each of the SSC members, as well as the candidate. Small talk was generally brief. All five members of the SSC had name placard that also stated who they represented. I also was present and had a "Secretary" card. The men expressed full confidence that they had no problem with me attending these confidential meetings. In fact, they designated me as official note taker, a role that frequently proved useful when they needed to refer back to what a candidate actually said. At the end of each interview, consulting each other and the secretary's notes (but not any opinion of mine), they gave scores for each category. I computed the mean score entered it on the master scoring sheet.

The Decision to Rank

At the conclusions of the interviews, SSC members sat together and, over pizza, came to a final consensus decision. After each of the interviews they had ranked the candidates individually using the sheet that they had devised with Dr. Eulen. Then, they combined scores. They then came to a final tally in which two front runners emerged. The five men talked about whether the distribution and range of scores reflected their own judgments; they decided that they did indeed.

The next decision was easy. It had, in essence been made long before. They would rank the final list. The final letter that Mr. Newmann and I composed reflected the SSC's groups: two candidates had been clearly on top. There was a very brief description of the characteristics that would distinguish one as the leader if the SSC were to decide. Three other names were included as a set in a second list.

In their "Final Report to the Board," the Superintendent Screening Committee included: 1) a concise timeline "Report of Actions Taken from December, 1994 through April, 1995," 2) a copy of the district-wide survey, 3) minutes of the Public Forum (February 20, 1995), 4) as a reminder, a copy of the criteria that the SSC had previously consented to and that was approved by Board, 5) the interview protocol that the SSC had used with the finalists, and 6) the formal letter of their recommendations. In the "Report of Actions Taken" members of the Screening Committee noted that as a group they had totaled 519.75 hours, both together and individually, in the process of preparing their recommendations. This fact was later widely reported in the regional papers.

All the five men, along with the rest of the county, could do now was wait.

The Announcement

Media Accounts

On May Day, 1995, the regional media was abuzz with the news that had been made in Hickory County that afternoon. "A troubled eastern Kentucky school district will have a new leader!" the TV station announcer proclaimed. Radio, television, print and gossip information networks all directed their attention to this suddenly prominent school district.

That afternoon the Board had rejected the Screening Committee's top two candidates. By a 3-2 vote, they appointed a man from the second list. A local man, one whom many had suspected would be named successor all along, had been chosen.

But the majority of the news coverage was not about who was selected as much as how the selection took place, and what it meant for this embattled Appalachian county. In fact, "down home" in the local paper, the way that the decision had been reached took precedence over announcing who had been selected. The front-page article opened, "Ignoring the superintendent screening committee's recommendation was a bad idea, two Hickory County board of education members say," and only then continued on to state who was picked by a 3-2 vote.

Other accounts stressed the larger repercussion that this selection might have. The Lexington paper, equally eager to share the news of the controversial selection, devoted the main section of its article to describing the precarious position of yet another eastern Kentucky district, noting "The selection comes at a delicate time for the board, which has been operating under the cloud of an investigation by the state Office of Education Accountability." On the evening regional newscast, the announcer stated that the appointee comes to "a system in the wake of an investigation that turned up 'several problems.'" Brief mention was made of the appointee's name and qualifications, as the announcer again returned to note that the OEA is developing a strategic plan that this district will have to follow and therefore, the new leader "probably has a lot of work ahead of him."

Public Responses

"It's politics, all politics!"

"Well, this is Hickory County, what do you expect?"

"Well, of course, he has connections. It's all nepotism - you can't get a job here without connections, even a superintendent's job."

"I wonder what *the State* is going to say about all this?! The Board didn't pick the Screening Committee's recommendation!"

"I can't believe they didn't take the Screening Committee's recommendation. And they put in 520 hours - and they threw it all away. It's just politics after all."

"As a young teacher I thought it'd change, but it doesn't - it's just more evident than ever."

"That's just the way it is around here."

Response in all corners of the county was vocal and vivid. In corner groceries, laundry-mats, and sandwich shops, on the steps of the courthouse, in beauty parlors, parking lots, and teachers' lounges, everyone had an opinion, and few were positive. Some questioned what had made this particular man the best choice for the district. Even if one agreed with the choice, there were still concerns about implications of how the choice was made. Those who questioned the decision wondered about the futures of the men on the SSC, as well as their own prospects should they fall into disfavor with the new leader.

Members of the SSC, meeting with one another the next day in small clusters around town and at Central, took the decision as a blow. Mr. Adams stated, "it was a home run in the bottom of the ninth with 2 outs." Although they had known all along that they Board reserved the right to appoint whomever they preferred, they knew that across the state that deviating from a screening committee's final list was a rare outcome. They had held out at hope that their recommendations would prevail. Shocked, even depressed by the news, most of the men tried to avoid public conversations about the matter, especially with those who had elected them. Mr. Smith felt that the best thing to do was "try to keep an open mind." Mr. Broughton added, "I want to be positive. I want to have a positive attitude. I want to be a team player. Who knows- he may turn out to be a team player." For Mr. Waters, the best that he could do for himself and for the situation was, he confided, "to just keep my mouth shut - and wait and see."

Analysis of the Aftermath

As stated at the beginning, the success of the Superintendent Screening Committee was to be judged along two different, and potentially conflicting, axes. These two dimensions of the problem were identified by participants at the outset: the person *who* is chosen and *how* he is selected.

"At Least He's Hickory County"

After months of suspenseful waiting for the name of the finalist to be released, the immediate response was a heated debate centering on the specific person selected. Since he was locally known, many on Central's staff had personal interactions with him, or knew of his leadership though friends, relatives, and/or acquaintances. Some perceived him to be a thorough, authoritative, well-informed, future-oriented and technologically-minded leader. On the other side of the fence were those Central teachers, like others in the community, who expressed misgivings about his temperament, his ambitions, his ability to be fair and equitable, his willingness to make decisions cooperatively, and his ability to effectively delegate authority. These dimensions of leadership were elements that had been repeatedly raised as especially desirable in the months under Interim Superintendent Kennedy. In him they saw a substantially different kind of leader, one who many in the district wished could stay on indefinitely.

However, personal characteristics are less relevant to this discussion than the single most important underlying issue about the person chosen. The one personal attribute that generated more discussion than any other was the fact that the appointee was indeed an "insider." Those who had adamantly argued for a person well known to members of the local educational community were glad that the person chosen was a long-time Hickory County resident. Mrs. Wilkins stated in an essentialism characteristic of others' comments, "He has to be Hickory County." Implied in this statement was, of course, the idea that he lived in the county. But more importantly, was the idea that in his very person he embodied that which they idealized as Hickory County values, i.e. loyalty, slow change, approachable, concern, commitment to place and family, etc.

Concurred a staff member who knew the appointee well, "That new superintendent - he has to be a Hickory Countian. If you want to have *Hickory County Schools* - there's no other way!"

The SSC members knew that there was a strong, but certainly not exclusive local preference for person form the close region. However, board members almost exclusively reported in later interviews that they felt pressured by influential friends and constituents to only choose from the local list. A board member defended his choice:

> They'd a hung us if we hadn't voted for an in-county person. People would rather have somebody *you know.* If they're from the community they know the people, how the people are, the needs, how to talk to 'em, treat you the way they want to be treated, they'll treat you good, listen, and tell you what's on their mind.

With elections coming up and the promise of an expanded role for the board if some of the practices instituted by Dr. Kennedy were kept, most board members intended to run again.

Another valued aspect of having chosen a local person was the idea that this person could serve as a role model for others who might aspire to positions of leadership. By choosing someone who was well-educated and involved with the schools, community leaders would be reinforcing the message that quality schools were long-term investments in the communities' futures. A teacher expressed this connection on the survey:

> The atmosphere and communities in Hickory County are filled with loving, caring, and Christian people. Our schools are our hope to continue our simple yet honored way of life. Strong schools should equal strong leaders for the future.

Along a similar vein, a co-worker had told my conversation partner's husband at the family sawmill, "if we can't produce someone from here who can run our schools, we ought to shut down Hickory County and start again!"

However, with local connections also come vulnerabilities, countered others. From the beginning, the SSC had been concerned that a local candidate might have too many challenges to overcome to take a decisive pro-KERA, pro-change stance. For, they argued, he would be "beholden to" those who had supported his candidacy, in subtle if not obvious ways. Concerns about the obligations that most people assumed would shadow this new superintendent were not limited to those who had reservations about his appointment. As conversations about this particular resident's strengths and liabilities multiplied, people at Central and in the surrounding communities acknowledged that as an insider, he perhaps faces an even more difficult struggle to gain control of the helm than an outsider might. Expressing a common concern, a cook wrote in response to the survey, "The new superintendent should be able to make his own decision - not the choices of Hickory County's 'click.'" "Fairness and equity can not be part of our school system as long as 2 or 3 controlling factions reign," noted a parent on her survey. Because "factions and nepotism has reigned supreme at this point Hickory County can only offer a challenge to anyone who wants to take it," remarked another parent survey respondent. Mrs. Collins concurred at a ball game:

> The superintendent is dealing with years of 'the good old boy system.' we have teachers who are placed in jobs where they can do the least harm, not the most good, because they cannot teach.

A business owner who knew several of the candidates talked about the inherent pressures on a local candidate that arose simply from living in the area:

> What worries me is that when you're in politics and do a lot of activities you tend to know those people pretty well that you've had dealings with and done each other favors, that will be a burden, a bias, a burden on him. But he may be able to do it – he does know how to run a school.

Students were also well aware of the situation; one commented on his survey, "We need someone who can make decisions for themselves." "Maybe he can overcome it," hoped a Central High parent who I met at the post office, "maybe he won't be in somebody's pocket." In a far corner of the Rite Aid drug store, another involved parent added in shushed whispers, "I just worry that they pay-back system will be a burden to [Appointee]."

In the heated climate of the days immediately following the announcement, teachers at Central were outspoken about what the appointment meant for local political maneuvering. The fundamental assumptions that staff made about how things were "really done," i.e. face-to-face, persisted. They wondered why the three of the five board members went with someone other than the SSC's top two picks. "You'd think they'd [the board] have picked somebody else. Who did they think it's be the best for?" criticized Mrs. Robbins, picking up on the Screening Committee's highly visible "Working for the Children of Hickory County" slogan. She went on to insinuate that *someone* had most certainly benefited from supporting this particular man's candidacy. Others added, "It's politics - the more people you can influence," the more people you can "have in your pocket." "The pay-backs from *this* thing will last for years!" moaned a weary Mr. Adkins, disappearing into his classroom and shutting the door behind him.

Staff, janitors, bus drivers, and teachers, although more than ready to share their frustrations about the election with me behind closed doors, were concerned that no one else know of their reservations. They were not willing to change their assumptions about what went on behind the scenes either, they assumed that this new person would "get even somehow" with those who had not supported him. From their point of view, it was expedient to seem like you were now "on the right team." Mr. Reilly worried about the repercussions for those, like himself, who were known to have opposed his candidacy, anxiously stating "the down side is that now we're on the wrong side of the tracks." Another young staff member reflected on her own chances of moving up through the ranks if her initial lack of confidence in the new superintendent was widely known. Fearing that if word got out she would not be able to go to this man for support when she needed that extra edge, she warned me, "You know, Maureen, with what you have on that tape there you could ruin me."

Another element of the decision that worried local residents was concern for how the State Department of Education and the OEA and would view the board's choice of successor. In their minds, the OEA was just waiting for a reason to remove the board and central administration. Local people wondered what would become of them now that "their" board had overturned "their" KERA-mandated Screening Committee's ranking. Local speculation was that the state investigation team had only held off their impending visit and ultimate take-over of the district because they were testing the board's resolve to comply with or defy KERA mandates. Later that day my neighbor came over and emphasized a similar point, stating, "I think there'll be a lot more coming down with 'heart troubles' this summer. That'd be best - that way maybe things'll change."

Central teachers were not the only ones convinced the state viewed any local candidate as inherently, perhaps inextricably, politically entwined. Those who had been left out of the inner circle of decision-making wondered why the majority of the Board members had pushed for this particular insider. Mr. Baker, a pleased, if surprised, supporter of the man chosen, remarked:

> Mr. Baker: "I'd a thought they'd a picked someone not local - with the State's concerns 'n all."
>
> MP: "Why would that be better?"
>
> Mr. Baker: "So that they wouldn't be so involved in local politics - anyway, to *look* like they weren't involved in local politics!"

Many wondered if the state would overrule the decision, and perhaps replace, the appointee.

In the minds of those who defended the selection made, another salient aspect of the state's wish to usurp local control was their rumored support for the two finalists on the top of the SSC's list. Although one was a local resident, they were both also "outsiders" to the extent that they had experience working with state-level officials, and thus had, according to dissenters, questionable allegiances. Some spectators had jumped to equate the SSC's ranking with the desires of the State/OEA; they were not the only ones to do so. The Board Chair also let it be known that he opposed the two forerunners, who were both actively pro-KERA. In fact, the board's decision was seen not simply as a show of strength against the interloping SSC, but also as a direct confrontation with the state. "If the SSC can have a candidate backed by the OEA, we can have our own" was one of the phrases said in the executive Board session and repeated publicly after the decision was made.

High Expectations

The other dimension of the problem that concerned local residents were frustrations with how the screening and appointment process had proceeded. It was this larger set of issues that occupied the center stage of conversations after the debate over the particular person selected had subsided to a dull rumble. Local citizens who had believed in the SSC process felt betrayed. There was clear consensus that in the past the hidden, non-public approach to naming a successor was not satisfactory. Whether peripheral or a member of the county's inner circles, those who felt that their schools needed to be radically renewed hoped for a change from the previous system that, all acknowledged, involved bargaining and personal preferences and was not be the best way to find a proactive leader. Several parents echoed the comments made by this father:

> We haven't really had an unbiased, un- and you couldn't have - under the old system, whether you were talking about [Former Superintendent or Former Superintendent], the way the system's been set up until 1990 we didn't have a chance - it had to be the way it was. I 'on't think there was a system in eastern Kentucky that wasn't.

Added a Central teacher, "before 1990 we didn't have a choice." But now, those who knew about the SSC process felt they had at least been offered the potential of a more representative decision-making process and, hopefully, a more responsive final choice. "This is a turning point in our county," declared a participant in the Public Forum. Recalling that two of the last superintendents had held office for a generation each, another Forum participant had stated, "As far as my children are concerned, this is the most important decision that will affect my children's lives."

Spectators had high initial expectations for the SSC and the members of the committee had been well aware of the public pressures to "do right." They had been warned another person at the Forum, "The committee should take its mission very seriously- the people of the county are not going to settle for anything less than an excellent job." By the end of the process, nearly all spectators felt that the SSC had indeed put in a tremendous number of hours, and recognized their somewhat fruitful efforts to bring more stakeholders into a public dialogue about the superintendency. Even if the final decision had been the same as it might have been before, many wondered if the process had indeed been significantly different as a result of the SSC's work, at least different enough to have long-term ramifications on the superintendency and the Board.

Those who had been suspicious of the SSC process, either because of who served on it or because of the process that it represented, felt vindicated in its apparent "failure." Criticism revolved around the SSC's seemingly ineffectual attempt to alter the balance of power and authority. "Today the older members of the School Board served notice [that they still had influence]" declared Mr. Taylor, joining the agitated crowd in the teacher's lounge. County school district employees were more upset by the way the selection was made in the end than with who was hired.

They were not the only ones "flustrated." In this small county of 30,000 people, it seemed that everyone, whether directly involved with the county schools or not, knew about the decision that had been cast. The very next evening my ever talkative neighbor came to my door, bearing Amish Friendship bread and the most recent news from her workplace. Knowing of my interest in the proceedings, she declared:

> That Screening Committee was a farce - it's just business as usual. The School Board knew who they wanted from the beginning and they got him. They had him in their pocket. The Screening Committee was just a legal matter so they wouldn't get in more trouble!

Others ridiculed the men of the SSC for "ever thinkin' they could make a difference." The final report to the Board had included a detailed listing of the actions taken by the SSC and the number of hours put in by the committee as a whole. This total of 520 hours featured prominently in the local newspaper's account of the SSC report. No one disputed the amount of work that the SSC had done, but several Central teachers and staff did question how much of a difference it made. Mr. White, leaning on his classroom door sill long after the bell, declared to me the moral of the story, "You learn a lesson - all those [SSC] hours amount to nothin'." In the kitchen, the cooks, enjoying a brief respite before the lunch time onslaught, were equally pessimistic: "What does that say about the Screening Committee? They wasted their time - politics prevail in this small town!" The elder Mrs. Adkins added sarcastically, "I like *our* Screening Committee - they didn't listen to them at all." Embarrassed at the SSC's "prideful" show of confidence in this new process, Mr. Robbins, a janitor, stated that he would not have put all that effort into such a high-profile, risky venture. Like many of his colleagues at Central, he felt that the Board still ultimately calls the shots. Asked if he would serve on a SSC in the future, he scoffed, "I'll not be made the fool!"

Opening the Discourse

Overwhelming negativity hung in the air immediately following the appointment. Those who found reasons to express their dissatisfaction first after the fact focused their blame on the SSC. Rather than seeing their own complicity in the board members' final decisive assertion of their authority, dissatisfied residents criticized the SSC. Even those who had expressed high expectations for this new modus operandi placed near exclusive blame on their representatives. They were quick to point to aspects of the Screening Committee's procedures that, they felt, undermined public participation and resulted in the SSC not being able to mobilize a critical mass of support to back up their ranking.

First, the five men were censured for not sharing information about the candidates more openly. Although to have done so would have been a violation of their agreement of confidentiality, the general public was agitated by not having access to the variety of information that usually was shared freely. The backlash of this attempt at confidentiality was, ironically, as Joe, a regular at the store I lived over put it, that "It was not non-public- it was *over public*!" Since there were few official progress reports, local people concocted their own to fill the void. Continued a senior educator who had watched the process closely:

> I think everyone in the committee kept everything secretive - the rumor mill got going very early. The Screening Committee was, "We won't tell anything!" - not even if they were on the SSC! Of course you can't tell the names until you do background checks, but they wouldn't talk about it at all.

But SSC members were again angry to hear from some of their peers only after the fact. Those who had remained silent and had refused to participate in the forums and surveys now seemed to have a lot to say. Drawing on the sports analogies that had been repeated sources of common understandings throughout their meetings, Mr. Adams summed up the trend:

> You hear everything - "They should have gone with your selection!" you hear everything. It goes right back to these 'drugstore coaches' they all know what to do *after* the game is over. They know what worked and didn't work.

Mr. Newmann chimed in and added, much to the agreement of the others, "during the ball game, the referees the most hated person."

Second, the SSC was also blamed for taking too long to reach a decision relative to the one formal timeline given by the Board's consultant. It seemed like they were always stalling the Board. It seemed like they were trying to press their power base. Mr. Broughton said to his colleague:

> What I'm saying, Phil, is that when the thing is over with and I reflect back on it ---- We took as much time as we could possibly take. We didn't rush anything and we shouldn't have, no body should. ---- as much as we did, the time we spent, we did the best that we could do

Like the others, he felt that "it bothers me that information pops up after it's all over with."

As was the case with the timeline, most of the public's concerns stemmed from the lack of information about the process and misunderstandings about the balance of power. Those who wanted to keep abreast of the process relied on what concrete dates and criteria there were; unfortunately this consisted mostly of a few newspaper articles which used Mr. Lawlor's original, multiply flawed timeline. Certainly, the SSC should have provided basic information themselves about this novel process, even if the exact definitions of what they were obligated and free to do were less than clear. In a debriefing session held by the SSC about a week after the decision, the men realized that they should have done even more public relations work. "I guess a lot of people were confused - they thought the SSC had the power, they don't know it's the School Board" stated Mr. Waters. Mr. Broughton added:

> A couple of people made comments to me, how did they make that decision - I saw in the paper that it was supposed to be this way! I thought that it was supposed to be [Candidate] or [Candidate]." Countered Mr. Adams, "That's not the way we meant it!

Countering the perception that local people did not know about the role of the SSC, Mr. Adams remarked that concerned and well-connected people purposely went around the SSC, talking directly to their Board member instead. The persistence of what they perceived to be a block of well-entrenched families was, they believed, reinforced by the average voter's reluctance to overturn a system of checks and balances that, if it did not benefit one directly, at least provided a stable, predictable environment.

Hesitancy, Hedging

If more publicly accountable representative models of selecting key leaders are to take root in rural Hickory County, there has to be reciprocity between those stakeholders who serve on the SSC and those stakeholders whom they represent, not just blame after the final decisions have come down. If a SSC is to represent others, they need to receive frank answers and to engage in discussions with a wider constituency than has traditionally been the case. SSC members were able to draw on knowledge gained through the survey, knowledge that was legitimate because it represented a diverse array of perspectives and "came from the people." But too many remained hesitant and hedged their bets by supporting the SSC in name, but not standing by them when it came time to commit their opinions to writing or participate in a public forum.

Though disappointed with the resistance of some of their fellows, SSC members recognized that taking public risks, taking a stake in this upstart group was not an easily undertaken venture. This means a "change a way of life, of times," Mr. Broughton argued in the debriefing session:

> We signaled the possibility that things could be out in the open, objective versus decided by a group. But in order for it to take a hold the stakeholders have to get involved.

"Like what we were doing here with the site-based council, the SSC, people have to come and be involved," added Mr. Adams.

Those who looked to blame the SSC noted that they did not know when and where the SSC was meeting. Although nearly all indicated that they would *not* have attended the open meetings anyway, they felt that they process "was kept a secret." But members of the SSC felt that they had indeed opened doors, widened the discourse and invited people in. They cited the numerous articles about the process, retorting, " I didn't think we shirked any part of our advertising responsibilities." In response to "people saying 'we don't know what was happenin'" there were open meetings. At this stage, the men were less than patient with those who had refused to become stakeholders in the process, but felt free to criticize when the process was over. The had the following exchange:

> Mr. Broughton: Well now folks, if they won't come to a public forum as well advertised as that was, what makes you think they would come to a regular meeting? You've got to get right realistic about this. they would have come if they wanted to --
>
> Mr. Waters: unless they was going to find out a secret they might come.
>
> Mr. Broughton: Lawd, I don't know how we could have made it any more public than we done!

The SSC acknowledged that people probably were hesitant to enter the fray. Mr. Smith continued, "I don't know if your cooks, and your janitors, you average person out there votes for perpetuating the system because of their job, and their reliance on one person for their job. Mr. Waters and Mr. Newmann talked about how teachers would say "I'm with you in spirit," but they wouldn't be there in body.] They also acknowledged that becoming involved meant that there might be repercussions. The school board representative said:

> In the past at least and I don;t know if it'll be in the future, it's been if you were on the "wrong side of the tracks" -- which you-all may be right now --things just don't always fall into place for ya. That's the only down side to going through this.

But one of the teacher representatives retorted, "I've been on that side ever since I've been teachin' so that's not going to bother me'!" Another member chimed in:

> As for me, the way I look at it, and the way I think most cooks and bus drivers look at it, They're not so worried about their own job, but I've got a child coming up, and I may need him to drive a bus or [be] a teacher or whatever, I think they're looking down the line and we don't want to get out of line now because it's going to hurt our family when I need it a favor for one of these kids. I believe that's a lot to do with it, why they don't vote. Still, in all fairness. . .

"Until the average voter supports change," noted Mr. Adams, bodies like the SSC will be relatively powerless. "The average voter still votes with this job requirements. It ultimately will be a problem as long as [the schools]are the largest job supplier in the county, when the average teacher makes $22,000 to start" added Mr. Newmann. These stakeholders were critical of the enduring resistance that they encountered:

> Mr. Newmann: Until we do that and until the average population, the average voter supports that idea --
>
> Mr. Broughton: I'm not sure this area does support that idea--

Mr. Waters: It still appears to me that they vote with their pocketbook or their job requirements, if I have to to get the kind of job that I wanted to do--

Mr. Adams: Well, I think I'd be someplace else, if I had to bend over like a lot of these people do, I'd be someplace else. . . But that's what it boils down to, being the biggest employer in the county. Lot of people hate to lose their sugar daddies.

Sighed Mr. Smith reluctantly, "If you don't vote to perpetuate the system, teachers won't be with you."

Despite hesitancy and hedging from some quarters, there were those who did participate through the various public meetings, surveys, and the Forum. Given the context of mistrust and assumed retributions, to do so was often an act that required courage and commitment to children's well-being. Although the Board's consultant deemed the response rate to the SSC's survey "not significant," to members of the SSC, generating a response *at all* was a significant victory. Just taking the risk of becoming a stakeholder in the process was very significant. And, for some of those who completed the survey, it was something that they were proud to do. A dozen people wrote extra comments on the survey, telling the SSC that they were right on the mark, noting for example, that they "would ask the same questions as on the front page" of the survey. For those groups who had been traditionally silenced or ignored, having the opportunity to be taken seriously through an anonymous survey was very meaningful. The high school students randomly selected to participate were the most outspoken about their gratitude to be included. The safe format of the survey was critical in their decision to tell it like they saw it. One teen, describing the "greatest problem facing people and their schools in Hickory County," noted that people were intimidated to speak out. He shared, " A lot more goes on that what people realize and students have not the courage to step up and tell someone. I on the other hand have the courage that's why I'm writing something now."

"We'd Do It Again"

Despite the mixed public reaction, there was consensus among the SSC members in their debriefing session; they would do it all over again. As a group, they had overcome their initial personal resentments and differences to stand behind this element of KERA, even if their support for the Reform Act was qualified at best. They had indeed come together and modeled participatory decision-making; they often came to consensus, including at the end when it really mattered. These accomplishments are all the more significant because the average onlooker assumed that they would be fragmented and eventually coopted by the board. Although they disagreed about how much influence the SSC did have in the end, even the greatest critic had to admit that they had invested more than minimal time. Members stated: "I sense we did a thorough, in-depth job and put time in clear conscience;" "We done the best we could do, I've no regrets;" and "Nobody [in other counties] put as much energy into it as we done." In their last meeting as a group, they gave themselves credit for the time and effort that they had invested in the process. They noted that overall, "people have been positive, the average person realizes how much time you spent. A lot of teachers feel the same way, quite a few (congratulate us) A lot of them had confidence in what we done, I have to say that!"

The SSC also decided that given the chance, they would rank their final list again. Mr. Newmann assessed:

> I think that we had people who were favorites, but we were open-minded and went through the process and some of those guys float to the top and some of them sink. (*Laughs all around.*)

Mr. Adams added, "Where there is clearly a difference you need to convey that." They weighed the decision against the counter-reactions by the board. Mr. Waters offered:

> You may well see a reaction from the Board, they may discount your top choices, but I don't think that I would want the SSC to not transfer that information - I think that it's in the best interest of the public that they do, not the best interest of the Board. . .

Further, the men reported repeatedly that they felt compelled to take action because they were sure from the beginning that the Board was not going to be proactive. Angered by the 3-2 final vote, Mr. Broughton stated:

> I think if you had 5 dedicated School Board members like we had SSC members, the SSC could have played a minimal role, like just going through paperwork. But you know, they was 3 School Board members who wasn't going to do squat up there besides listen, that's the way it ended up anyway.

In their private briefing session, they summed up, "It's not a perfect system, but it's a lot better than what we've had. . . If they've got a similar situation [in another district] as we did, I know in eastern Kentucky, where the employer in the school is the major employer, I think you probably should--." The men were adamant in stating that the local SSC would know what kind of action they most needed to take. They decided that in their position, "If we had done any less we wouldn't have been satisfied."

"A Change of a Way of Life"

The SSC had aroused ambivalence and even antagonism. At least it had aroused something. When asked to decide upon the most important contribution that they felt the SSC had made, the group consensus was not that their most important act had been trying to influence who was selected. Rather, they concurred that the most important and profound aspect had been problematizing the prior approach to hiring and offering this new process for discussing problems and potential leaders. Reflected a member of the screening committee:

> One reason it was such a story is that it's a change of a way of life, a change of the times. . . It signals that possibility that things would be done out in the open, objectively rather than decided by a group [behind closed doors].

Mr. Waters added:

> I think it raised the level of awareness, I think what we done was right. Who knows what we done, this might not be the end of it. And I hope [Appointee] does a great job, those are my thoughts.

KERA's establishment of the SSC process was critical; had it not been for this externally-mandated reason for their existence, the successorship would have been determined by those closest to the decision with little or no systematic input from those to be lead. Mr. Adams recognized the importance of the Reform Act, but added, rightly, that they had taken considerable initiative in interpreting and fulfilling the widest intentions of the law. He stated:

> I think the law was one thing that put it out in the public, 'cause before apparently all these Boards' selections, most of them, at least in southeastern Kentucky, all done behind closed doors and that gets a certain part of the process, but not like what we done.

Asked what they thought it would take to have the average voter support this kind of a process or the SSC, the men agreed that people would have to be willing to talk about their problems and then do more than share them with kin and neighbors, they would have to put themselves on the line. Mr. Newmann answered that this remained a precarious position:

> I think the SSC raised the awareness. I think that's the biggest contribution that we had to of the whole process - it was in the public eye, and it was a long enough process and had enough newspaper coverage to highlight the process. I don't know, we talked about that before. It's just a matter of whether you have enough other employment here besides to take the pressure off of the job system.

Others concurred that the county's economy and the prominence of the school system made significant change slow going. However, they felt that having made education a much more common topic of public discourse, they hoped that the problems that the process had raised would continue to receive attention. Mr. Waters offered, hopefully, "And what we done might boost him- maybe." To which a colleague replied, "He's got to realize that he's got the job, he's go do it now."

Although it was not their original intention to become role models, many who watched from the bench considered those who had ventured into the fray to be their advance guard. These front four had planned their strategies carefully, they would take advantage of every hole that the board and Interim Superintendent would leave open, they would try to reach their goals no matter what leverage was used to displace them. Although the outcome of the screening process had not been all they wished it to be, the game plan that they had followed scored points nonetheless. The SSC members felt that it their involvement had contributed to nothing else, "Maybe by seeing some people be open and put in the time, maybe some people will be more involved." In reviewing the accomplishments of the group, the five men felt that as a result of the SSC process: people spoke more freely about problems in public; district employees, if not the general population, were more aware of the formal process that "was available to them under KERA;" there was more exposure on what was happening at the schools; and "a lot of people have made some changes" in anticipation of new superintendent who would enter office with the need to prove himself and live up to state as well as local scrutiny. "The teachers had confidence in what we done," noted one of the teacher representatives, "What we done was right. It increased awareness. It may not be the end of it. . ."

Men and women who were not on the SSC hinted that the lesson that they took away from the decision was that public action could not be limited to just one committee and one hiring decision. But few stakeholders publicly recognized their own culpability in the decision-making process. The Screening Committee had been limited from the beginning in their ultimate influence, acknowledged Mr. Baselton, an outspoken teacher in the district who had become formally involved late in the process, "it's not their fault, our fault, but if we do [let people make decisions for us] again next year it's our fault."

Moving On

When the dust from the aftermath had cleared, people expressed the desire to have a future to look forward to, despite reservations or even anger, about the selection process. One of the men who delivered the coal for Central's ancient furnace expressed the common sentiment that "In a nutshell - I've a little bit of reservations, but I feel OK about it. You've got to give anybody an opportunity." In a related conversation that I had with a teacher about why being "plain folks" was important to her, she stated:

> It's important to get along with people. Everyone's not alike, but when you live in a small town and everybody knows everybody, people need to get along. Everyone needs to get along because they know they'll see each other all the time and they need to work together."

The sentiment that people would stand behind whomever was selected had been expressed clearly in the surveys. Asked to write something that they thought "a superintendent should know about schools in Hickory County," one of the students asked the candidate to look past stereotypes and to relate to individuals:

> I think that he should know that even though our test scores are all clumped together, that there are students here that care about their future and that we are behind he or she all the way.

In describing the way they would work together, participants in this dialogue repeatedly used the common metaphors of the family, head, and body. Several people expressed the relationship with their leader as being like that in a family. "We can be a headache or a family - we like to be treated fairly and desently and will, in turn, treat others the same. We are willing to work with the superintendent," wrote an elementary school teacher. Others described the people in the small communities dotted throughout the county as having the potential to act in a coordinated way as one body. A teacher respondent wrote that we will "try to work together as a body to reach a common goal." "Hickory County is a wonderful place to live and raise children," commented a parent respondent, continuing:

> We have educated some very bright students who have gone on to successful careers. The potential is here and the time is now to begin a new direction for our schools. The community mood is ripe. Wherever the head leads, the body will follow.

However, added another member of the public who had picked up a survey, only "if he is a good leader for our schools than the parents and teachers will stand behind him."

Upon taking office, the appointee related to the press, to his central office staff, and informally to me his sense that "this has caused enough divisiveness - it's time for healing." As the initial press release had noted, he would become leader at a crucial time in the district's future. The state was far from finished with investigations into the district. The local population, not to mention to school district employees, had clearly divided sentiments about his leadership. The students desperately needed more equitable access to quality programs and greater opportunities for success. It would be a personally trying time. As a teaching assistant noted on the surveys:

> To come into Hickory County as a new superintendent would offer a career challenge to control, correct problems in the county school system. This would be a time of strengthening character and ethics within the person hired to meet these challenges.

As one of the students responded, in answer to the survey question about what a superintendent should know about schools in Hickory County, "For one they will have their hands full and two, whatever they do we will appreciate it." But his was to be a "tough row to hoe," for no matter what actions he took in the future, "People will be watching him a mighty close."

SECTION THREE: CONCLUDING THEMES

CONCLUDING THEMES

Summary

Reform is Local

This analysis began with the realization that while policies may be written on a state level, reform is a radically local process. If efforts to decentralize authority and to build local capacity for reform are to succeed, reformers need a better understanding of what reform looks like at the grassroots. Gaining this insight has been the guiding reason behind this research program. Through more than a year of one-site fieldwork in an Appalachian Kentucky high school and its host communities, I have come to see how complex and hotly contested this process of reform can be.

The central question of this work remains: How did stakeholders address the problems that they targeted for reform? Inherent in this question are two related processes, that of identifying and solving problems and that of becoming stakeholders. This work has shown that these two are equally important and, in Hickory County, closely entwined.

KERA as Catalyst

The Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 (KERA) provided an important catalyst that sparked debate and action from the halls of the state legislature to distant beauty salons up mountain hollows. KERA's assessment and accountability system, KIRIS, and the new Office of Educational Accountability generated a sense of expediency to identify and then address items that the framers of the Reform Act defined as "problematic." Hickory Countians had a stake, not only in avoiding being declared "in crisis" due to their test scores, but also in negotiating with the state officials what they would reform and on whose timeline.

It is both fascinating and consequential to look at reform at Central High School during a time of upheaval and debate. By focusing in on a set of people who are undergoing an accelerated and/or particularly fragmenting processes of negotiation, this study is able to highlight those underlying issues of resistance and resiliency that otherwise would remain at a level of tacit understanding. When there was suddenly more at stake, what was previously understood unproblematically as "how we do things *here*," became a matter of public debate, derision, and division.

Certainly, the themes underlying this Appalachian district's approach to reform preexisted the Reform Act; indeed they form the foundation for how much of Hickory County social and school life is conducted. It is fundamentally important to better understand these resilient elements of mountain life. If these basic ways of conceiving of the world and its people are not taken into account, KERA, and whatever policy mandate follows it, will falter.

Further, KERA in itself is not enough to create stakeholders who have a genuine long-term interest in sustaining reform. If changes are made simply for the sake of superficially complying with the minimal standards of some Reform Act, much of the original intent of the law will be lost. Those who take a stake in reform must take an active role in defining their own problems, priorities, and solutions. Thus this work is important in that it provides the basis for a critical analysis of the challenges of creating ownership of educational reforms, the key to sustaining significant change.

Significant Changes

When I returned to Hickory County the year after my fieldwork year to do follow-through work, the question that I was most frequently asked was if I saw significant changes from the past year. Certainly there are some. The Tech Prep programs are going strong and have incorporated new freshmen into coherent, substantive sequences of courses. In one year of concerted efforts to take KIRIS seriously and to maximize performance, Central High has managed to nearly meet its two year KIRIS Accountability Index. The site-based council too is enjoying a new resurgence of interest. Teachers who once were the SBC members' harshest critics have now been elected themselves - as much as a way to oust unpopular SBC representatives as an opportunity/punishment for those who cared enough to become outspoken to test their convictions in this formal arena. Although the SBC still faces considerable challenges to its authority, it exists and members meet. Hickory County Schools have a new superintendent who has built an entirely new science lab for Central and has new front doors, locks, and floor tiles on order. One of the grants that a team of teachers wrote will be bringing in funds for technology and connections to the Information Superhighway.

These changes, while laudable, are somewhat superficial. For the most significant changes are not these cosmetic and numerical improvements, but movement deep under the surface. Reconceptualizing the "problems" to be reformed was the first step.

Reconceptualizing the Problems

The process of reform begins with the most fundamental issues of who defines the "problem" to be solved, how they define it, and what they choose to do about it. Reform is never simply a matter of rational choice, of disinterested, apolitical questions of efficiency and organization. Rather, it requires face-to-face, personal engagement with long-standing issues of power and privilege that have created and maintained the system that is in place. However difficult, challenging these assumptions and the hierarchies that they facilitated, is a matter of vital importance if Hickory County schools are to benefit more than an elite, small minority.

For many at Central, it suddenly seemed that there was a proliferation of problems concurrent with, and even exacerbated by, KERA. "Thirty years ago when I began teaching we didn't have any problems. . . Now it seems we have nothing but problems!" so began the bearded and weary Mr. Collins, a veteran teacher who regularly sat with the other senior male faculty when he came to have lunch in the cafeteria. With the calls for reform and the threat of intervention by the OEA, school staff at all levels were agitated about what reform might mean at Central. No longer did it seem that KERA was going to be a report that passed away as innocuously as the district leadership had hoped; reform of some sort was here. Now, issues that were only recently viewed as intractable givens became matters for discussion. Teachers like Mr. Collins resisted the implications of taking a hard look at such thorny questions. It was easier to become defensive and withdraw. A defeatist attitude often accompanied this seeming proliferation of the already long list of concerns. Those who preferred to be resigned announced: So, we have a 50 percent drop out rate? So, parents don't care about schooling? So, these kids don't have anything to look forward to other than welfare if they stay here. But all was not gloom; some faculty and staff responded to KERA's questioning of such assertions with renewed vigor and enthusiasm. Things were being agitated, shaken up. It was also in these first, ground-breaking stages that it seemed that what once was solid footing was giving way to new assumptions, paradigms, and rules of conduct. In turn, these too were questioned and challenged.

One of the main elements of re conceptualizing the problems was to determine who was causing problems for whom. Teachers were quick to blame students, parents, administrators, and each other. Students blamed teachers. Parents blamed everyone.

Everyone blamed the state for imposing KERA. Those who spoke out about Central's problems were cast as troublemakers. Those who joined the conspiracy of silence and who refused to publicly acknowledge that there were concerns were also seen as contributing to the problem. It seemed that everyone had their own opinions about what Central's problems were and who was at fault.

In the melee people longed for simpler times when superintendents ruled as benevolent dictators and common people were not welcome to be, and therefore were not responsible for being, part of the discourse on reform. Then, at least if one did not like the decision made, it was clear who to scapegoat. You could always blame the person higher up.

This was an unsettled time at Central. Reform was not easy. Although there were moments of discovery, it frequently was not fun either. Mrs. Anderson, a teacher who had gone to Central herself "back in the good days," put it this way, "Somebody's tore up all the time. I've never seen so many tears. It's mistrust, Oh! mistrust, frustration and tears!"

Administrators and faculty alike expressed frustration that the process of reform was neither simple nor straightforward. Everything seemed to go much slower than anticipated. Stakeholders were frustrated that reform did not proceed as smoothly as they had hoped. So little seemed to change. Because proposed changes in the policies and practices of their school challenged hierarchies of power and privilege, reforms were hotly contested. Once a new rule was passed, there was no assurance that a significant number of faculty or students would comply. Reform was both political and personal. Mrs. Wilkins, a teacher who had served on several SBC committees during the course of the last year, expressed her disillusionment with the process:

> KERA and site-based are the perfect thing – the right way. But maybe we aren't mature enough or don't know enough, we need more training or the right kind of training. At least under the old system we knew the rules: if you weren't related to people in power you didn't get anything, ever. This [KERA] raised people's expectations, we thought that it would level the playing ground. But it didn't. It's just politics as usual, just a different crowd.

At one or more points during the year, many other teachers at Central expressed the similar sentiment that maybe it might be better to return to the former system. Few liked the long-standing rules, but at least they provided a frame of reference against which one could plan for the future. Reform such as KERA meant uncertainty, something which few were eager or prepared to embrace. In the minds of many at Central, it was better to know where one stood, even if that place was not particularly promising than to feel set adrift.

Becoming Stakeholders

Rather than seeing these first stages of implementing reform as evidence of stakeholders' incapacity to change, they should be seen as a courageous struggle to personally confront the implications of working for change. Less unity may well prove to be a very good thing. In the past, faculty and staff had few, if any, public forums in which to meet together and identify, define, and address problems of common concern. Decisions were made by a select few without the diverse needs and perspectives of the school in mind. Those who disagreed with the policies all too often resisted implementing them and, when that was not enough, undermined the authority of those who made the decisions. They remained complicit in perpetuating the very problems their leaders attempted to address.

However, during the fieldwork year, Central staff and students gained experience in taking a more active role in school affairs. Encouraged by their new administration, fewer people were just being complacent. A critical mass of teachers resisted pressures from their colleagues to conform to past levels of mediocre performance. In discussions about how to actually achieve KERA standards of literacy and numeracy, teachers wanted to find their own ways to these standardized ends. They resisted state experts telling them exactly what to do; instead committee and department discussions increasingly focused on devising locally-relevant curricula and applications for academic skills. They wanted to articulate their own interests, define their own problems, and respond to the ways that local people thought about the meaning and value of an "book learning."

In this process, some found that the systemic reform exemplified in KERA facilitated their sense of local ownership. One of the core principles is coupling top-down state mandates with bottom up advocacy and engagement. The chance to take action on their own priorities was a welcome opportunity. Mr. Raleigh, a teacher who had ventured to state her opinion in more than one occasion in faculty meetings , stated:

> In this educational reform, as in any new endeavor, to be told what to do rather than to discover problems and solutions though our own methods and resources is disheartening. Every since Johnson's War on Poverty, some political body has been trying to "fix" the problems for us rather than assisting us in solving them ourselves, like children... To have someone who doesn't live here or understand our heritage suggest that he knows what's best for both our region and schools is so demeaning and unproductive. The most positive things about KERA are that

> it allowed local control and tries to be non-political. What a difference in focus from the usual dictation and "missionary work!"

Together, stakeholders made some tenuous steps in moving from a dependency mentality in which they expressed little hope of change to a more active sense of themselves as stakeholders in the process of addressing their problems. In the process, they moved from having a stake in the reforms' failure to having a stake in its success.

The Chinese character for crisis, , combines the elements for both "opportunity" and "danger." This dual sense of personal crisis was poignantly experienced by those who became stakeholders in the process of educational reform. They felt that now that they were given the opportunity to express their opinion, they ought to have their say. In the process of taking a stand, they had to lay claim to where they stood. And this was dangerous, it marked them as being potentially at odds with those who controlled key positions in the school and community. By venturing to speak their mind, they faced the risk of professional reprisals, financial repercussions, and personal retaliation. Nevertheless, a committed core of parents and educators found spaces, both public and private, in which to find and exercise their voice.

This fundamental shift in agency is what really is promising about this case. The sense that they could and should define their own problems and speak for themselves was key. They were on their way to becoming stakeholders and effectively negotiating the terms on which they would reform their high school. Given all the obstacles that they had to overcome, even incremental progress toward their goals was monumental. In this way, reform is indeed, as Mrs. Ely, the educator cited in the introduction, put it, "like moving mountains. It's grain of sand by grain of sand. You've got to take it one problem at a time."

Moving Mountains

In summary, those who worked to reform the policies and practices of Central High School faced a tremendous challenge, for the barriers to change are many. These obstacles are as important features of the social landscape as the mountains are significant elements of the physical landscape. Some of these obstacles arise from assumptions, paradigms, and frames of reference that are of the participants' own making. Others are barriers erected by bureaucratic and organizational ways of regulating schools. But whatever the source, reform in Hickory County was, and remains, a feat akin to moving mountains.

Pushing this analogy further is useful in that it reveals moral dimensions in undertaking this daunting task. Those who stated publicly that there were issues worth coming together to address faced an uphill battle. At the outset, many felt that the policies and practices at Central High were not problems, that is, there was nothing that one could do about them. Further, it was not apparent that the status quo needed to change, or if it even could be changed. There was, in essence, nothing to reform. Central's enduring fifty percent drop out rate is a prime, and particularly disturbing, example. Like the mountains, it was considered to be an indelible feature of the school's landscape. Thus those who dared to argue for reform, whether in the emerging public decision-making bodies or in informal spaces, were putting themselves and their credibility on the line.

Despite the obstacles that might have swayed them from attempting to conquer the massive issues before them, a core cadre of about a dozen teachers and administrators went ahead. An additional twenty or so were silent partners, supporting reforms such as attendance and higher expectations for reading, yet unwilling to take a public stance that might cast them as being aligned with the state reform or the outsider principal, Mr., Newmann. The most involved teachers and principals knew that they had the committed support of a further dozen parents and community members. Further, a significant though largely unmobilized majority of teens were there to offer support; they too wanted Central High to be a school worthy of claiming, and an education worth obtaining. So, in parallel fashion, they set off into the unknown. Although not necessarily in concert, sometimes even oblivious to the interests of the parallel cohort, these major constituents claimed a stake in successfully addressing the common challenges that they faced.

They negotiated a precarious path towards reform of Central's curriculum, system of representation, and even extended a hand to help with the screening process for selecting a new superintendent of schools. In setting out for largely uncharted territories, these stakeholders were giving up some of the security that they had known. But for some, as an involved parent, Mr. Robbins, reported, the sense that they had pushed back their own horizons of what was possible in their district more than compensated for the increased degree of uncertainty. The rest of this concluding chapter summarizes the major themes in how Hickory Countians built on what they knew to push out beyond the known.

Reform, Resistance, and Resiliency

Dynamic Cultural Themes

Throughout the preceding chapters a fugue of voices compete, diverge, combining, and ultimately, resonate on several common themes. This conclusion is a coda that brings together the dominant motifs into six core themes. These themes unite elements introduced in Section One the background chapters on KERA, Central High, and multiple meanings of education with elements that figured prominently in Section Two throughout the stories. Each connecting theme has been selected because it expresses an underlying frame of reference that influenced how stakeholders approached the problems that they targeted for reform.

Each theme is organized around a set of assumptions, myths, cultural symbols, and ways of relating that were known by nearly all local participants. These themes are not static frameworks that are impersonal absolutes; they are *dynamic* ways of approaching and understanding change. Each encompasses paradigms and paradoxes that contain potentially conflicting elements. Those who became stakeholders had to come to grips with just such multiple allegiances and competing paradigms; the ways in which stakeholders chose to incorporate these ideas into their responses varied greatly.

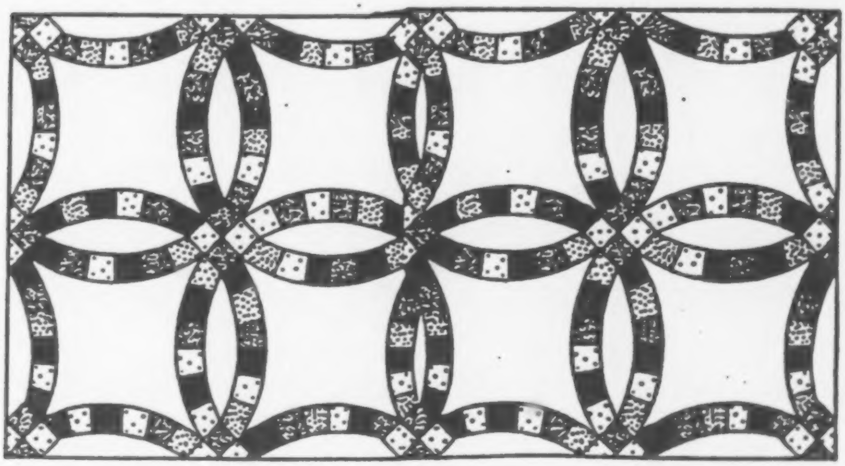
Resistance and Resiliency

I believe that at the heart of the each theme's dynamic are two complementary elements, resistance and resiliency. Resistance was a marked feature of Hickory Countians' response to KERA. They were not going to take what was to them the latest example of government regulation laying down. "We'd rather fight than quit!" declared large black letters on a billboard on the new highway that school buses pass every morning on their way to Central. Although this was the Kentucky tobacco growers' motto in their fight to keep an important local industry profitable despite threatened government intervention, the slogan applies just as well to local educators' determined fight to defend their stronghold from outside control.

Resistance was both active and reactive. Parents and teachers resisted former administrators' stranglehold on information regarding the Reform Act. They called for more open discussion of reforms rather than clandestine decisions that effectively marginalized non-elites from participating. Local stakeholders also resisted external definitions of what their priorities or policies should be, in part to assert their continued autonomy to the state, but also because they did not wish to simplistically import solutions that they felt were mismatched to their goals and lifeways. As the usually quiet parent, Mr. Bargo, stated, "I don't want to be a model school if it means we are modeled after someone else!" Hickory Countians also resisted the implications in KERA that they were unable to govern their own affairs without state accountability mechanisms.

Although Hickory Countians' resistance fueled the state's threats to take punitive action to encourage compliance with the standardized goals, these threats, paradoxically, encouraged greater resiliency on the part of local stakeholders. (Re)defining their own problems created spaces for local reformers to take into account, and thereby reify, local values of mutual interdependence, personal relationships, "people before programs," and the enduring importance of place and family ties. They used the myths and symbols around them to renew their sense of purpose and construct themselves and their cultures as worthy of protecting. They drew on myths of the Frontier Family, The Great Flood, and a heightened sense of nostalgia to remind themselves of times in which they *had* acted together on behalf of their schools and children. Because local educational leaders drew so effectively on deeply-held beliefs and cherished ideals, their calls to action were able to reinforce locals' sense of self-efficacy and self-sufficiency, and in turn, engender greater resilience. This response ultimately led, albeit in a way state reformers could not have fully anticipated, to sustainable ownership of educational reforms. They reminded themselves that they were resilient people, they would endure and prosper. By reclaiming the very basis on which they were willing, and able, to face their problems, stakeholders in Hickory County are, indeed, moving mountains.

Figure 5.



The Interlocked Pattern of Themes

Like the interlocked circles that make up the wedding ring quilt above, the six themes share key elements in common yet are complete entities in themselves. Taken as a series, the rings form a distinct pattern. They taken on further shape in contrast with the common background upon which they all rest. Each of the rings in the pattern is patched together with fragments of stories, of pieces of the larger fabric of life from which these themes are cut. Some of the fragments are used in several rings, some key pieces are the links that join several themes. Repeated pieces create dominant motifs within a particular ring. As in the illustration above, each piece has a unique design, a balance of white and black that gives each piece its special imprint. These designs are comparable to the balance of resistance and resiliency within a particular storyline or incident. Some rings or themes emphasize resistance more than resilience, in some the motifs are reversed. But both are present to some extent in each theme. Reform has many shades of grey. It is the interplay of the various designs of resistance and resiliency that give the quilt of Hickory County its unique and vibrant character.

The first of the six themes begins by restating Hickory County residents' fundamental conviction that they need to take the lead in looking out for their own best interests. "We take care of our own," expresses not only the desire for local control, but also presents the essential dilemma that the local educational elite do not take equal

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care of all students, but primarily look out for their own friends, kin, and peers. While the case of Central High illustrates elements that might lead to a more inclusive sense of collective responsibility, it also shows how vested interests have repeatedly undermined a more equitable stance to taking care of all young people of Hickory County.

The next two themes summarize how a person should act when trying to resolve long-standing conflicts of interest and to propose changes. Participants asked, how can a person be of the mountains yet move mountains? "We solve things face to face," the second theme, expresses the preferred ideal of being able to talk openly and informally with one another as equals. However, recognizing that power differentials based on family name, wealth, public office, and gender significantly undermine actual equality, this theme points to the significant gap between the ideal and actual practice.

"Do not act like an expert," the third theme, exhorts those who would support reform to do so in a way that does not demean or marginalize others, especially the majority who have little formal education beyond 9th grade. Instead, actively building coalitions in which the common knowledge of all stakeholders is respected is key. This theme incorporates the concept that formal schooling does not in itself make one educated. In fact, those who have a significant level of schooling may be at greater risk of "losing the mountain," that is losing touch with the constituents for whom they are supposed to be advocates.

The next two themes point to the power of numbers and information to legitimize stakeholders' interests and authority, create value judgments, and give substance to definitions of the problems. Instances in which "numbers are legitimating," are summarized under the fourth theme. Both state officials and local faculty use statistics to evaluate, rank, and assess the achievements of Central High School and its students. But those on the receiving end of such numbers resisted them as adequate definitions of who they were or could be. Recognizing that these statements carry official sanctions, I caution that the numbers may be at best weak indicators of the degree of change, and may even be misleading as to the actual direction of change.

Fifth, in Hickory County as elsewhere, "knowledge is power." Information about how schools operate, what KERA mandates, and what stakeholders' rights and responsibilities are, all are valuable commodities. Therefore, those who did not want KERA to succeed resisted by hoarding such knowledge at the top administrative levels. Stakeholders are just beginning to discover how one finds out what one needs to know. Further, they are going through growing pains as they venture to ask questions and try new methods of producing their own information. A critical dimension to this process of generating and sharing information is the cultivation of alternative spaces for discourse. It is in these spaces that much of the creative work took place in redefining local priorities, forging regional alliances, and sharing useful information.

Finally, the sixth theme, "we are mountain," brings together elements of a concretely grounded ethic of renewal based on connection to place and people. The mountains stood for resistance to change, especially that imposed from the outside. They also stood for resilience in the face of pressures to change their traditions. Drawing on allegories and metaphors of the mountains, Hickory County youth and adults describe themselves and their communities as enduring, resilient, and endangered. It is against this backdrop of rugged mountains that this episode in educational reform comes to a close.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SIX CORE THEMES

Theme One: "We Take Care of Our Own."

One of the striking things about education at Central High is the pervasive sentiment that they wish to manage their own affairs. Whether their resistance is focused against the intervention of state officials, or against local parents or business leaders, Central's teachers and staff resist external intrusion into "their" school. They wish to maintain Central as a place where they can take care of their own peers, professional lives, and their own problems.

Most people at Central and in its host communities identify with a specific hollow, family, neighborhood, social class, church, and/or other civic organization. These entities form the basis for distinguishing between " insiders" and "outsiders," "our own" and those "out there." These distinctions are seen as vitally important when defining one's own interests. They are the basis for constructing others as competitors for scarce local resources, be these jobs in the public schools, funds to extend a city water line out into the county, or spots in an Honors English class. Putting members of one's own group first also extends to relations with the state and their Reform Act. Hickory Countians resent government intervention, especially in that most prominent of local institutions, their public schools.

The Great Flood Myth

Hickory Countians prize their independence. They seldom see sufficient reason to join together as communities, much less as an entire county. But they also assert that should sufficient crisis arise, they would all join together to address whatever common problem threatened them all. The basis for this claim is the Great Flood Myth.

From about January through May the low-lying areas of Hickory County are prone to flooding. Spring rains gush down the steep mountain hollows, joining waters from the vast network of creeks and streams which run alongside the roads, and flow into the Boone River. The mornings after a storm has passed through or while it is still raining, bus drivers and children listen eagerly to the radio to hear if school has been canceled. They know that if the River has overflowed its banks or if the many tributaries have backed up and over the roads, driveways, and streets, they will likely have a day or even a week off as people sit back and wait for the waters to subside. In the 1994-1995 year, students lost over a dozen days because they were "stuck behind water."

However, sometimes the news of rising waters is more ominous. Numerous times in the last 100 years the River has threatened to wipe out the county seat as well as other low lying areas of the county. The threat of another such great flood has been a marked feature of Hickory County life.

This lingering threat provides that basis for a myth of community solidarity in times of common crisis. People come together to save what they have a common stake in protecting: their homes, property, families, and lands. To state that this is a myth is not to imply that it is not founded in fact. Rather, to assert that this is a shared myth is to recognize the power that it has to organize, evoke, and express key understandings that are related to what one does when a time of crisis arises. Residents speak proudly of how their neighbors and families all pitched in to help the National Guard erect sandbag walls, dig ditches, and evacuate people. They talk of the civic determination to rebuild towns, dig houses out of inches and feet of muck, to replant flowers and orchards. They talk of how people volunteered to care for children so that others could make sure that there was something there for these children to look forward to having.

Being able to look back and cite times when they came together contributes to residents' feeling of being resilient. Together, they assert, they can stand up to most anything nature or government sends their way. The tale expresses an ideal model of collective responsibility and action. This myth has the power to convey a sense of security throughout the year. Stories are told about the floods all year; they symbolize the latent potential that all Hickory Countians have to become stakeholders should a sufficient problem arise.

An Educational Crisis?

Does the state of education in Hickory County present such a sufficient crisis? Judging from the lack of involvement or the lack of a widespread sense of impending - or even potential - disaster, it seems the answer must be, "No."

Some basic outcomes might suggest that a tide of mediocrity and complacency is rising among a significant portion of the teachers and students. Fifteen to twenty percent of Central High students cannot be convinced to come to school on any given day. Teachers are glad to encourage troublemakers not to come back to their classrooms in exchange for a passing grade. Nearly half of all ninth graders are not there to graduate four years later; a vocal minority of their teachers wonder what they would do if they had the unanticipated, "extra" work that these students would mean. One in six would-be seniors have conceived a child and/ or are parenting or married by the time they are 18. Many staff reported that at least young parenthood gives them something to look forward to, a way to feel that someone cares about what happens to them. Central's KIRIS scores are among the lowest in the state. Teachers repeatedly assert their own inabiltiy to make a differences as evidence that the students come in with few survival literacy and numeracy skills and the best they can do is keep them afloat. Students arrive with little direction, few do more than drift through Central unless they are scooped up by a specific vocational or Honors program, proactive mentor, coach, or college-oriented guidance counselor. Why don't more people see these as problems that imperil their communities considerably more than rising waters?

"A flood doesn't bother a man who lives on a mountain" summed up a business leader in Hickory. This comment exemplifies the real limits to an inclusive understanding of collective responsibility: unless a crisis directly threatens me and my family, it is of little concern. Unless there is a crisis comparable to a flood, they will only take care of their own and leave others to fend for themselves. Unfortunately, in the saga of education in Hickory County, the rising tide of mediocrity and disengagement is not yet perceived as a crisis that affects all residents.

Many have yet to become stakeholders. Like their response when the inevitable rounds of spring flooding come to threatened creek dweller, they just safeguard their valuables and wait for this latest rampage to pass. People just pack up and move themselves and their wherewithal to higher ground, out of the way of the burgeoning problem. They work their networks to send their children to school in another county, they use connections to find out about and then compete for the few good jobs. Well-connected parents make sure their children get "the best" teachers and the college-bound or vocational courses they need. And in the meanwhile they do not challenge the system that sweeps the rest of the county's children away. As long as they benefit from their position, they can relax. In fact, they have a stake in the current arrangement, for if others fare poorly, it makes it easier for them to do well. So they resist becoming involved on behalf of those who they stigmatize as being too laggard or "uncaring" to get out of the way. Once safely on high ground, it is all too easy to look down on those left below. But the muck that is raked up and the mess that is caused by the floodwaters leave an unpleasant stain on the face of their county. But still too many sit back and hope that given enough time, these "problems," like the annual spring flood waters, will receded from public view once again.

"Everyone's Related to Everyone"

Central High School personnel are much like a family. Indeed, nearly half of the faculty of Central High are related to one another by blood or marriage. But the range of meaningful relationships are much more extensive than these. "Everyone here is related to everyone" is the shorthand way of expressing the multiple ties of friendship, barter, church, social clubs, neighborhood, profession, and age that weave a network of social ties among the many buildings of Central High's campus. Connections extend far beyond the campus but meet up again and again on the school grounds. The result is that staff and students are inextricably bound up in a Gordian knot of mutual obligations.

Much like the Great Flood Myth, this understanding of being like an extended family contributes to a resilient sense that residents share something special in common. In one way or another, they are all of one people. This paradigm about the world could provide the basis for collective action. Being part of a family provides an important orientation of long-term belonging, of constituting an "us" that is distinctive from people in other states, even other counties. Central High faculty do speak of "our" graduates who have achieved distinction, "brag on" "our" teams and "our mountain kids" when they do well or try hard. This paradigm can provide the basis for establishing collective responsibility for all members of the family.

Unfortunately, not all young people are equal members of the Central family. Staff resist the notion that all of the students are "our own." One may be a favorite son while another is, at best, a poor cousin. And for those Hickory Countians who are not white, race clearly marks them as being perpetual outsiders. In the narrowest interpretation, the "family" includes only closest kin and long-time friends. And, as the freshest student soon learns, Hickory Countians take care of their own first.

Central High as Contested Space

It is not mere coincidence that it is at Central, the flagship of the Hickory County public schools, where issues of belonging, loyalty, and responsibility come to a head. Teaching is not just any job; for many, it is one of the few existing jobs in which they can locally use their advanced skills and interests in the liberal and vocational arts. One of the most important and highest profile examples of taking care of our own is the preference for hiring local people before outsiders, even if the local person is not quite as qualified. What gives them an edge is that they already belong. Residents want to invest in people who have a stake in building a life locally, and thus living with the consequences of their actions at work. Further, residents want their children to "grow up knowing that there will be a place for them here."

In a small county, word gets around quickly whether or not a person is believed to care about the quality of education they provide for young people. Although the majority of Central's teachers and staff are quite accomplished educators who care about their work and their students, a minority have questionable priorities and are content to abuse their positions. Most of their colleagues are adamant that the only reasons why they were initially hired and why they remain impervious to removal are that they are well connected. This ready excuse is resistant to validation, peers cannot prove that deals were cut. So, in absence of proof they assume the worst.

One of the long-term outcomes of these regular practices and assumptions is that when it serves the accuser's ends, any colleague can be charged with having made use of connections to get their position and therefore of being incompetent. But perhaps the most devastating outcome is that students are keenly aware that some of their teachers are below par. They believe that the only reason that such a person could be in his or her position is because of connections and administrators who do not care to follow through when negligence or abuse occur. They wonder if policies of taking care of certain insiders is so prevalent, when they are adults will *they* ever get a job?

Educational reform at Central is important for another reason. This is where young people learn the skills and attitudes that can prepare them to contribute to families, paid employment, and volunteer work that are critical to the viability and vitality of whichever communities they choose to belong to as adults. Parents at the top of the Hickory County pyramid want their children to do well. For many, this includes the preference for their own children to come back and take over the family law firm, real estate agency, elected office, educational position, or business. If the current service levels are maintained, the handful of such occupations in the county currently need only a few successors. Although those who suffer from the extremely high ratio of people per doctor (2,329) or per dentist (4,342) would disagree (Census, 1990), (and some of these medical personnel would concur as they need the help) there are those who benefit from being the near exclusive service providers and may be loathe to welcome what they see as competitors. Young people learn from experience that those who have achieved these positions of prominence seldom welcome competition. Those who are local outsiders learn that the future is stacked against them, that there is likely to be no place for them, even at "home."

"The State Looks Out for Its Own interests Too."

As seen from the southeastern mountains, "the State" is a personified, although distant, entity that, like Hickory Countians is of course looking out for its own best interests. Reinforcing this conviction is a construction of the state government, the Department of Education and the legislature's Office of Education Accountability as inherently at odds with local governance. Although systemic reform requires effective cooperation between local and state levels, mountaineers in Hickory County assert that it could never be in the state's best interests to encourage autonomy and self-reliance. This line of reasoning continues to undermine the establishment of productive partnerships between the state and local levels.

In this predominantly Republican there is a fundamental mistrust of "big government," especially government which arises from the Bluegrass. Mrs. Allen, a teacher who came of age in the mountains in the late 1960s, summed, "We don't trust outsiders. I guess its just the mountain attitude. It's anti-establishment. We don't trust government that they don't have an ulterior motive." Hickory Countians believed that the state has clandestine motives for proposing education reforms. And, they believed, these do not end with changing the way the schools are run. Thus they resisted even the appearance of state involvement because it signified erosion of their ability to determine their own course of action.

In contrast to local stakeholders' paternalistic concerns for what is best for "our" children, state officials are cast as caring more about what is good for their own careers. The oft-asserted belief that "experts" are using their positions with the Office of Educational Accountability to achieve prominence in order to move to a higher level of government service, even to the Commissioner of Education's chair, only serves to reinforce local educators' convictions that the case of Hickory County is but a pawn in a much larger power struggle. State legislators and bureaucrats have created KERA, the sentiment goes, to prove just how much authority they can exercise. The long-term consequences for the rural, Appalachian districts are of little concern. They will not be there to live with the consequences; that is a matter for the districts.

Theme Two: "We solve things face to face."

Participants asked: How can a person be of the mountains yet move mountains? The second theme expresses the preferred ideal of being able to talk openly and informally with one another as equals, of addressing problems face to face. Residents prefer to keep problems within the family (literally or figuratively), i.e. between locals rather than bringing in outside referees. Recognizing that power differentials based on family name, wealth, public office, and gender significantly undermine actual equality, this theme points to the significant gap between the ideal and actual practice. Finally, I summarize the key elements of this approach by contrasting the ideal local approach to that exemplified in the Reform Act and in the OEA's investigation.

In the months of discussion preceding the selection of the new superintendent, one of the main criteria that emerged was that he (it was always "he") be someone the common person could "sit down with" and "talk face-to-face" with. Survey respondents and public forum participants wanted someone with whom they could build a personal relationship in times of need, they wanted the possibility of creating win-win situations. This paradigm about the importance of personal, individualized relations establishes an ideal for how negotiations, decisions, and exchanges are to be made. Hickory Countians take time for one another. They are "not like city folks, always rushin'." At best, they sit down with one another in a restaurant, on a front porch, in a courthouse office, or out horseback riding and discuss their mutual needs, interests, desires, and objectives. People regularly cited instances when they or someone they knew was able to sway a decision by personal influence by going to talk directly to the person in charge.

Discussants seek ways to create win-win situations. "I wouldn't say we have politics at our school," stated a teacher, "it's more you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours." The distinguishing features are that both parties gain something they value. Further, whether or not such intervention actually occurred, the public assumes that this negotiation has taken place. Veteran teachers readily hypothesized why and how each new teacher got their job; the claim that they objectively were "the best person for the job" was meaningless as colleagues tried to guess what made them the "best" and for whom it was good. The concept that there was a neutral standard of "good" that was distinguishable from the individual was beyond nearly all people's frame of reference.

Face-to-face deals create important relations of reciprocity. By hinting that a vote for block scheduling might garner a vote for a special budget allocation later or by hinting that hiring a niece now might make it easier to hire someone else's niece later discussants established expectations of future returns on this investment in the relationship. In this small county, most people are related to at least a few others by blood or marriage, ties which are further entangled in business ties, and links to neighborhood, church, barter, social club, music group, mutual dependence on one road, etc. In the face of limited social and economic services, residents rely on one another for the necessities of life, work, and friendship as well as access to luxury goods. They want to know that they can depend on a tangible, steady friend rather than being vulnerable to the vagaries of the economy, weather, or welfare laws. They want to know that someone will be there to defend their family name and interests. Further, they want to know that leaders will work with the people who already are in Hickory County, that this is where they belong and that whatever the outside world thinks, they are not merely disposable people. They want to know that others understand and respect the local score so that patience in waiting for their turn and keeping to their place will pay off in the long run. They want to know that they have a chance. Likewise, they expect that elected officials will remember their support at election time and then give them their due when it comes time to make a personal request for a job or favor.

These expectations of reciprocity further perpetuate the cycle of personal negotiations, for those who have paid in have a vested interest in maintaining the long-term payoff for their contribution. Rather than opening up the game, they want to make sure that what resources exist are doled out based on face-to-face agreements that were established often years beforehand. Thus, from this point of view, KERA's assumption that the slate can simply be wiped clean and that all community members have the same rights is dangerous. In Hickory County, reforms do not proceed on the grounds of efficiency or abstract principles. Personal considerations based on real life interactions remain primary.

The Importance of Informal and Personal Ties

Hickory Countians stress the importance of personal ties as the basis for approaching problems. In fact, the very success of joint problem solving is contingent upon finding a way of making a meaningful connection with others who similarly have a desire to see a particular outcome. They value being known to others as individuals rather than as a number or a statistic. When asked what they valued most about living in the country, people from all walks of life reported as their top reasons: feeling validated as a unique person, recognized for their special talents, and cherished as a friend. The primary importance of trust and being looked after was particularly pronounced when compared to the anonymity and animosity that these rural people felt was characteristic of urban life. A staff member at Central summed up a common comparison when she compared the peaceful feelings of taking evening walks with her daughter down her road with the apprehension and mistrust she felt when walking on the streets of "the City:"

> It's just more relaxed and friendly here. You can be yourself. You can look people in the eye and feel free to smile without being afeared they will think you're trying to mug them – or they'll mug you.

She felt that people knew her as an individual and therefore would look out for her and her daughter. Another resident summed up the goal of knowing and being known, stating that he wanted his children to be able to walk around the courthouse square (which in many Kentucky county seats is in the center of the business district) and people could say, "that's so-and-so's son"' or "that's so-and-so's daughter." Of course, others noted, that goal is a double edged sword - it you don't toe the line, your children will also be stigmatized.

A second aspect is learning where a person stands over the long run. Is she consistent? Does he follow through with promises? Potential partners need to show that they are willing and able to follow through. Outsiders or newcomers are at a decided disadvantage; their track record is not publicly known. And, many of those who have come through to "develop" this rural area have a decidedly poor track record. So, looking back over the past, Hickory Countians are hesitant to put much faith in promises made on paper or by outsiders with a large grant or fancy degree. This very reasonable skepticism has contributed to their resistance to believe that KERA will last, and hence their pessimism that it is worth buying into. For them, rather than creating more security, this reform, written by well-schooled professionals and codified into legal (i.e. depersonalized) terms, means more insecurity. In such times, they find it prudent and reassuring to gravitate even more desperately toward the known. They look for people they can count on rather than policies that may not be around in five years.

Third, decisions are frequently made on the basis of knowledge gained through informal interactions. One of Mr. Newmann's challenges in gaining a following was that people did not know him through church, sports, or other similar social settings. And, as long as he maintained his residence in the next county, these remained unlikely. In a similar vein, one of the reasons that many Hickory Countians wanted someone local for superintendent was that they wanted to encounter him on the streets and in church and hear (encouraging words) about their schools.

A Private, Family Matter

Hickory Countians often invoked images of the family as the epitome of the kinds of relationships they felt should knit together a community. Building on this analogy, one of the enduring maxims in Hickory County is not to air the family's dirty laundry. One of the fatal flaws of Central's supposedly open faculty meetings was that participants resisted and resented being placed in a position of being asked to publicly criticize or contradict someone else. They would rather discuss things privately on the basis of friendship or kinship rather than in public on an adversarial basis. The concept of family discussed in the previous section provides a central paradigm for constructing ideas about the importance of privacy and a personal approach.

Administrative details should be taken care of privately, with the respect accorded a member of the family. A preacher discussed the rift that he saw between the official ways of formally handling disputes or personnel issues with his preference for one-on-one relationships, "By Kentucky law we have to do discipline before the public. But there's nothing wrong with taking the teacher or student aside and talking to him." In making this statement he drew on Scriptural sources that say if your brother sins against you, you should first take it him, alone. Likewise, a long-time administrator felt that negotiations for contractors, hiring, etc. have to be handled delicately, privately. If such personal activities are thrust in the public limelight, he stated, "it's like trying to make love to your wife with all the relatives all watching."

Adult Approaches to Managing Conflict

Students at Central learn important lessons that, if followed, will allow them to live within the bounds and expectations of the communities in which they are coming up. If they intend to replicate the ways of relating, these skills will prepare them well to take their place in the county's social and economic hierarchy. Not the least of these basic competencies is knowing how to manage conflict according to local norms. Many student disagreements and jealousies erupt as physical confrontations. Although few teachers took their conflicts out into the halls or in loud one- on-one exchanges in the lounge, there are notable similarities in the way they managed conflicts. First, youth and adults should know beforehand who their friends are and if they are likely to stand by them in time of conflict.

Second, they need just cause to put themselves in jeopardy. Defensible causes are usually defined as (prior) possession of a valuable commodity such as a job, a service contract, a position at a school close to one's home or one that has relatively better furnishings than others in the county, etc. Competitions over lovers and spouses are less common, but when they occur they are not forgotten for a very, very long time. Another just cause is when "someone runs his mouth" about or at another person. Unlike youth who are likely to physically retaliate against the teacher, staff person or peer who they felt maligned them and theirs, faculty members' retaliation is more likely to be an assault on the offender's character, name, or on the position held by the provocateur.

Third, negotiations should revolve around matters of honor and principle. Supplicants should not pester their superiors for petty favors, there needs to be a sufficient grounds for taking the risk of going to see someone in a position of power. One request nearly everyone deemed to be reasonable was for special consideration when a desirable job opened up. One of the key principles, as noted in the theme above, is that local people should be given priority for jobs. Under KERA, superintendents still reserve the right to prescreen applicants for jobs and send only a select portion to the SBC for consideration (this is at least in the initial round, the SBC can make a special request for more). Invoking the principle above, one could go to a superintendent or to of the five SBC members and bargain on behalf of a niece or son. Maintaining this face-to-face method was a given. Teachers assumed, and then acted on the belief, that everyone else was still trying to gain whatever private advantage they could. The result of not changing their own practices was that some people felt that site-based decision-making had only made their lot harder; now they had "five hands to fill instead of only one."

A fourth similarity to the way youth manage conflict is that there are distinct advantages to making the interactions public. Putting potential conflicts in the public eye makes them more accountable. A SBC member who taped the proceedings noted a marked increase in keeping to the schedule, covering all points, and discussing items when the proceedings were being recorded. Laying more things out on the table made it harder for decision-makers to use switch and bait tactics or declare that they had never promised a certain thing at the SBC meeting. Although teacher members of the SBC remained wary of demanding justifications for actions, at least a few more of the criteria for making decisions were made public. Having this information then put parent and teacher members in a better position. Although other members and the principal initially objected to the taping, the member was exercising a legal right and would not back down.

Fifth, whether opponents win or lose a particular conflict, the fact that they showed up and gave it a good shot is what counts. Conflicts can be handled in a great variety of ways. Sports provide a public means for adult men to engage in physical, assertive interactions that are governed by clear rules. Newmann, a tall man who enjoys a good three-on-three game of basketball, found that his status was decidedly enhanced when he played ball with some of the prominent young basketball stars from Central. Several had been skeptical of his ability or right to lead, but after the game, they had a new respect for him. The fact that he played one of the best games of his recent career did not hurt either. "I didn't have any trouble from any of those boys after that game," he declared.

In the ideal, adults deal directly with conflict and negotiate win-win solutions in egalitarian, open, public ways. However this is seldom the case. Certainly not all people are social equals, able to talk freely with the superintendent who until recently with the advent of SBCs was almost exclusively responsible for allocating jobs or talk with a School Board member who has an important vote coming up. All residents do not have the same bargaining power, whether that be in the form of potential services or potential number of votes from that kinship line. This does point to the ironic point, however, that a person with little potential economic bargaining power but who does come from a large kinship line, especially if they all reside within one school board member's area, actually possesses something of significant value, a potential block of votes. One need not be rich to have influence, but it certainly helps extend one's influence beyond election time.

The strength of the ideal of a public, accountable face-to-face discussion is enhanced by the negative connotations that alternative approaches have. Private deals, although acknowledged to be the norm, are seen as less than honorable, especially if the aim was to gain unfair advantage above and beyond that reasonably required. in the same vein, unsolicited gossip spread behind someone's back also has a decidedly negative, if seductive, image. Like fist fights that were not properly called out, or a person who took unfair advantage of a superior position and sucker punched the weaker, talking about a third party who was not there to defend themselves was not seen as entirely respectable.

While discussing pressing problems behind others' backs rather than doing so openly is viewed negatively, it is often seen as the best of only real means of exerting influence. This may be largely due to the fact that the inability or lack of desire to confront the person directly is related to unequal status and power. Resorting to non-public means of critique, influence, coercion, or derision provides one of the few currently viable avenues for discourse. They would rather express themselves through gossip, tales, anonymous flyers, a note a board, bathroom graffiti, etc. than be silent. The very act of sharing this information and having a opinion do confer a degree of power on the one speaking. Yet it is an act that ultimately reinforces the understanding that the person has unequal power and is unable to engage in these acts in public.

As long as teachers, parents, students, and others assume that you get what you want at Central by personal bargaining and, if necessary, coercion, site-based councils will play a limited role. If discussions remain secret, the real stakes hidden, and motives masked, Central staff will have an extremely difficult time bargaining at the SBC table. When mutually conflicting decisions already have been made it is hard to come to a new decision that all can agree meets their personal interests. To the extent that participants are unable to see how reforms might benefit students but rather put the vested interests of the most outspoken or influential of their adult constituents first, student welfare will never be the top priority at Central. This prominent institution will remain the stage upon which adult conflicts are managed, negotiated, placated, or antagonized. Any student learning that takes place around the fringes of these central activities will remain largely a matter of luck and perseverance on the part of individual students.

In addition, as long as people prefer to try their luck in private settings rather than in public-supervised ones, it will be very difficult to convince people to be constructively critical in official spaces. Faculty meetings, SSC public forums and surveys, SBC meetings, SBC committee work groups, and others will continue to struggle for legitimacy. Why should people take a stake in pointing out a problem publicly when they could talk about it ad nauseam in their own circle? The simple reason is that each little circle simply reiterates its own pre-approved perspective, reinforces the norm of not joining any other circles, and undermines official decisions made by bodies that aim to be representative by saying "that's *their* decision not ours." But by refusing to participate they are, themselves, contributing to the problem.

Another challenge is that as long as people assume that private dealings are what gets things accomplished, they will blame themselves or other supplicants when things do not go as they wish. It is not the fault of the person in power, but the inadequacies of the request or the requester that are at fault. Because they assume that in theory most people could, and thus, should, go to decision-makers and present their case, if a decision does not go the way that requester wanted, it reflects on the asker. Observers will often justify the outcome, stating that the person should have talked more, argued more, bargained more and that if they "lost" then they deserved to lose. From the loser's point of view, however, the one who refused the request is the one at fault. But as neither asker or refuser publicly pursues or refuses this conflict, both can believe that the other is the single person "really" at fault. This blame the victim approach absolves the decision-maker of responsibility and says that the asker should do a better job next time.

A Semblance of Harmony

One of the outcomes of taking problems off to the side is that the small public realm can appear to be relatively peaceful and harmonious. Teachers, particularly the newcomers, reported the clear sense that on the surface, Central seemed like a nice place to work. But as Mr. Harris, a relatively new hire, noted, "People'll give you space and create a friendly atmosphere. They'll be polite, pretend to be friends. But they'll talk like snakes behind your back. It's hard to know who your friends really are." Like the students who learn to use gossip networks to compensate for the lack of reliable or substantive public discourse, teachers want to know what is going on under the surface of civility. What kinds of relationships organize how stakeholder groups divide off?

The "good old boy" code epitomizes one ideal way of building a cohesive, interdependent group of stakeholders. Men who are considered by their peers to be good old boys are likable, laugh at each other's jokes, don't push for achievements or actions beyond the norm, tell stories on one another, gossip about current events, etc. It is a brotherhood of temporary equality, shared fun, and common values of independence and self-sufficiency. They all have a stake in maintaining these qualities of life for themselves and for one another. Challenges are decidedly unwelcome, and what cannot be ignored is bitterly criticized. This club provides a supportive context in which to make defensive and derogatory comments about those who would limit male autonomy, especially women, be they wives or the female head of the OEA. For members, being part of the club means that you maintain a semblance of harmony and unity. You do not contradict your buddies in public, although later you may make express dissent in a semi-friendly way through anonymous photocopied flyers about them or tell jokes about their ideas. Men regularly speak of being "just" a good old boy. To them, this disclaimer means that their actions are all harmless fun. But, the subtle remark also recognizes that for many, this code, puts a façade of frivolity on quite serious differences of status.

Those who are not good old boys, or who are not of the same clan of good old boys, do not see this code as either innocent or innocuous. When used as a derogatory accusation, "he's a good old boy" means that a certain powerful person has his close group of friends who he confers with in private and will support in public. This group is not egalitarian because it is not open to all, nor does it respect a wide diversity of opinions. Members may even ruthlessly deny that any other group acts in the public interest; among civic leaders, this practice adds to the construction that "they" are hooligans while "we" are public servants. Sameness is encouraged, although members are somewhat free to disagree as long as they keep it within the group. Critics point to the good old boy maxim of "don't cause me trouble and I won't give you any trouble" as highly inconsistent. Even when other good old boys do cause trouble, their peers are not likely to follow through and punish them for stealing supplies, being absent, bootlegging, or not upholding the school discipline code. For those who are not good old boys, that way of dividing up the world does not appear to be good for anyone other than those few inside the club.

Impersonal and Written Solutions

The local theme of sitting down and working out mutual interests face-to-face stands in even sharper relief when contrasted with the impersonal approach exemplified by Reform Act mandates and in the OEA's investigation. The kind of reform exemplified in KERA requires the effective coupling of state top-down mandates with bottom up engagement and ownership. Paradoxically, the more the state tried to codify and regulate this coupling, the more local educators resisted.

"You cannot mandate change!" warned one of Central's teachers. However, the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 clearly requires specific kinds of portfolio writing, performance events, and applications of technology. It encourages consideration of dozens of other practices from an altered school year to block scheduling. However, teachers took these required changes as insults to their authority and threats to the autonomy that they had long enjoyed. The attitude seemed to be that they would lose face if they complied. Therefore many retaliated. If instead, reform had meant new kinds of collaborations that would create win-win situations, more teachers might have complied. But in any case, it would have been in their own time and in their own way. Those who had come up with the unwanted rules would just have to wait and see.

Recent interactions that Hickory Countians have had with the OEA give strong support to the view that outsiders value official, written correspondence more than face to face direct negotiations. Writing out mandates, letters of confidentiality, and official warnings create an additional set of problems. It means substituting printed, static words for give and take discussions. To Hickory Countians, the author of such a document seemingly had little power if he or she could not meet the accused face to face and settle differences together. Thus the OEA's written letters of warning were perceived as cowardly and impotent threats. Therefore the more letters were sent, the more resistance and resentment was generated. Central teachers had shown themselves willing and determined to overturn written rules. The example that is most cited and vivid to school personnel, parents, and to students was that when told that they could not smoke, teachers and staff appealed to their superintendent on a private basis. The decision was overturned.

Given this model of appropriate adult behavior, it is little wonder that many of their students saw the very existence of new dress code requirements and attendance rules as sufficient grounds for retaliation. They too set out to prove that their leaders could not write rules that they could enforce. Students saw all too many of their teachers, janitors, and bus drivers smoke, lose reports, fail to file attendance papers, and push the limits of school rules themselves. They could see past the smokescreen. They could smell the after effects. All too keenly aware of the hypocrisy in this model, students dare teachers to turn them in for smoking. Most teachers, even those who do not smoke, have found it easier to let it slide.

From the standpoint of Hickory County, these norms of formalizing, standardizing, and codifying rules violated valued assumptions about how people should work together. They set the scene for enmity and distrust rather than beginning from the assumption that parties could find mutual interests. Local educators wanted state officials to come on their territory and make their charge. Yet to be frank, at the very same time they hoped they would not!

Local people see written contracts as poor substitutes for genuine respect and expectations of reciprocity. The men on the SSC felt very conflicted about writing up a formal agreement of confidentiality, asserting that a piece of paper could hardly encourage trust "if a man's handshake doesn't mean anything anymore." To them to sign this statement of trust would imply a fundamental lack of trust.

Further, set rules violate the norm of flexibility an individualized punishments. Most people at Central believe that students should be disciplined in ways that reflect individual circumstances. In a parallel fashion, teachers and administrators held different standards for different students. They did not buy in to the slogan that all students can be expected to achieve at high or even moderate levels. Likewise, they believed some teachers should be cut more slack than others so they cause as little trouble as possible. They asserted that some parents' should be ignored as perpetual troublemakers, and so on. To set rules of behavior and standards for achievement that all should meet would be a "problem." In their minds, the differences and hierarchies are given. To tamper with local assumptions is to create problems.

What then do local educational leaders want? A member of the educational elite summed up his preference, one that brings together ideas expressed by many of his peers in different settings. Instead of sending intimidating, vague letters from Frankfort, he wanted the OEA and department of education officials to come down to Hickory County, to come to his territory and to see for themselves. Instead of communicating by innuendo and threat, he wanted one respected leader to sit down with him, a designated elder. They would have coffee in his home or in a side booth of one of the old downtown sandwich shops. They would both slowly lay things out on the table. The guest would say what he really wanted (not the official version) and the local person would state his case. They could see if there were any mutual interests. They would remain rational and detached and peaceable. "Confrontation only causes calamity and pain!" he summed up. In the ideal, each would go home and think about what the other had said. He would hope that the guest had learned something from him, and would further modify state dealings with this Appalachian district in the future to be more in line with the norms upheld by the preexisting decision-making cliques. For the local educator's part, maybe there might be something to some suggestion that the state official made. If so, and if he agreed that it might be a good idea, he might implement it. It would be his decision, and not up for commentary by the general Hickory County rabble. It would be done in his own time and in his own way.

It is unlikely that this approach would be satisfactory to KERA accountability officials. Such an approach would wreck havoc with the timeline for implementation established by the state department. It would enable districts to pick and choose palatable elements and not approach reform systematically. It would keep decisions in the hands of a very few instead of democratizing the base of stakeholders.

What then should potential partners do? Model the same cooperative, mutually respectful ways of working together in state-local interactions as you would have develop in local-local decision-making bodies. Too often state mandates have come down to the districts in ways that feel threatening, condescending, and that denigrate or, at best, ignore local mores and traditional lifeways. State officials eager to assert the right to mandate should use external, authoritative interventions strategically and sparingly. Local stakeholders resent the implication inherent in the state's current investigation that they are unable to govern their own affairs. Yet, many look to outside intervention (albeit on their own terms) as the only solution. However, when this external assistance is done publicly and punitively, it tends to enflame the desire to retaliate rather than cooperate.

Theme Three: "Do not act like an expert."

This third theme addresses how one uses information in a social context dominated by personal relationships in order to successfully present and then follow through with ideas for change. Reform in Hickory County schools is not primarily a matter of efficiency or expediency. Rather, reform of what is arguably the county's most influential organization is much more about putting people before programs. It is about creating novel and context-specific ways for more kids to be successful without appearing to compromise with those who want standardized changes. Reform is also very much a matter of maintaining regional autonomy from what is deemed undue intrusion by external authorities. It is about continuity with the past and respect for traditional ways of knowing and ways of working together. Given these multiple concerns, those "experts" who wish to advocate reform have to walk a thin line. Theirs is a precarious balance between those who resist reform because they believe that the way Hickory County schools are run is "good enough" for them and theirs and those who feel there remains much to be done.

The Knowledge Base of Experts

Those who are recognized as experts draw on sophisticated knowledge, both "book larnin'" and the "common sense" derived from everyday living in the region. Men and women with expertise in such areas as auto mechanics, hunting, gardening, child development, and carpentry are sought out for their valuable knowledge and humble yet proficient manners. While there remains some conflict about which of these is more valuable, the effective expert must be versed in both. Being "mountain" means a person is respectful, especially to elders who have a great deal of "common knowledge." She or he is humble and does not put her- or himself above others on the basis of "outsider" criteria, i.e. degrees or credentials. He or she does not try to beat someone who is down, by, for example, humiliating them at a basketball game by winning by too much. For just like having a degree does not necessarily make one a good person, formal schooling in and of itself does not make one educated. These degrees may provide useful background skills or information, but they are seen as being detrimental to the extent that they undermine the person's ability to work with others in a mutually respectful manner. In fact, being full of "book knowledge" was seen as clogging the mind, blocking out common sense. People are seen as only being able to absorb so much, they have to make choices. They have to take sides. Having knowledge means having responsibility.

In fact, the person who has achieved a high degree of formal education is at greater risk of "losing the mountain," that is, acting like an expert who knows better than long-time residents, supposedly has all the answers, and does not need to listen to or work with other (rural) people. Someone who has been successful in college, especially far away from Hickory County, might well return wanting to infuse modern assumptions about individualism, mobility, and material gain into definitions of who should be accorded respect. But, in the local view common knowledge , that is, understanding the importance of obligations to people and place, are what truly make a person an expert. This resilient view has given local people the enduring sense that they are the only ones who can be trusted and who truly understand that these interlocked components are key to building a community. For most mountain people, theory or "book larnin'" is of little value unless applied to life. From this perspective, experts can be compared to the protagonists in the "educated fool" parable about the man who could talk at length about automobiles in theory but could not, the story goes, find his own engine if his car broke down.

However, from the viewpoint of a system undergoing swift and significant change, experts are needed who have knowledge about how best to understand, negotiate, and implement KERA initiatives. Especially during this push for systemic reform with its concomitant jargon, literatures, and constant amendments to KERA, the new knowledge requirements are of a considerably different, more technical nature than that commonly shared between neighbors at the laundry-mat. Expertise in the Reform Act has not only great potential utility, but carries official approval. Hence, it has enhanced status. Because of the increasing importance of having officially-sanctioned knowledge from written sources, including books, being designated an "expert" in this knowledge has taken on increased importance.

The Messenger and the Message

When contemplating reform, considerations of the source of the expert's knowledge remain important. Just because an idea is good does not mean that it will be good for Central. While those most eager to bring change to Central's curriculum and system of decision-making welcomed some external advice, even they were not willing to simply implement change for the sake of doing something different. Mr. Rogers, a parent, summed up the sentiments of those who did want to listen to diverse sources of help:

> The more ideas you have the more likely there is to be a good solution. You can get good points from internal and external researchers, KERA, the university, that can apply to society as a whole. But you can't use just exactly the same solution, even if you have the same problem.

They did not want generic knowledge, they wanted expertise that reflected local values, priorities, and problems. Education about things that worked or were practiced elsewhere were not be assumed to be relevant or workable there. Central teachers did not want to listen to newcomers or committee members who suggested that block scheduling worked elsewhere. Nor did screening committee members relish recommending a candidate who was eager to make swift and sweeping personnel and policy changes as he had done in his previous position.

Most at Central sided with finding their own way. Teachers and staff resented and resisted the notion that their special place in the world could be reduced to a standard formula. They were not interested in reforms that would make Central more like other schools. As Mr. Harris, a parent, said, "I don't want to be a model school if that means we are modeled after someplace else, like California!" They resisted conformity done for the sake of conforming or for the sake of being something different than they were.

An invigorating aspect of this response was that Central educators focused more on locally-available resources, networks, and existing strengths. Rather than looking to external experts for ideas of encouragement, they went ahead on their own. Looking at their own agriculture, fine arts, and business course offerings, among others, teachers saw that there was much to take pride in. They saw that they had local pedagogical experts who did engage students, who reached out to students who might well have left Central disillusioned and barely able to read. They saw that they had a very small, but very dedicated corps of parents who donated innumerable hours to sporting events, booster clubs, and extra-curricular activities. Each of these constituencies will say that they are working "in the best interest of the children." If they work together, acknowledging each other's contributions instead of competing for resources and undermining each other's efforts, there is much they can do.

A strength of the current approach to reform is Central educators' reluctance to jump on every passing bandwagon (although admittedly few pass through remote Hickory County). They would rather wait to see if the reform comes around again before diverting resources and personnel to a new initiative. In this they may be missing some very valuable opportunities. But in so doing they remain critical consumers who would rather judge a reform's merits over time than to immediately commit support to many questionable projects that scatter their staff in too many directions at once.

At the same time, I observed a more damaging aspect to the backlash against external authorities and ideas. In general, there was considerable recalcitrance to listening to outside viewpoints. But sometimes this was not a matter of caution as much as it was point of principle. Much of the antagonism against ideas that came from the bluegrass (part of the state) drew strength from the paradigm that the medium is more important than the message. Some Hickory Countians resisted what experts stood for, namely authority based on outside practices bolstered by a formal credential, even if they might have secretly agreed with the stance that the particular advocate took. Prejudice that denied any possible contribution by those well-versed in KERA, even if these were local people, often undermined careful consideration of their remarks. While their insights may well have been helpful in reorganizing the course lists or addressing drug abuse, what mattered to some listeners was that these parents or teachers legitimized their suggestions by drawing on studies and reports done by external sources. And what is worse, these external sources were not neutral nobodies, they were government representatives or missionaries who threatened to sweep in and take away local control. For some teachers this harkened back to days of the War on Poverty and the VISTA and Appalachian Volunteers who, locals acrimoniously charge, "came in to tell *us* how to live." This tendency to de-legitimize experts with off-hand remarks such as, "they just don't understand how we've *always* done things" was particularly pronounced in those staff members who did not want to change their practices in the first place. Being able to charge that a person need not be acknowledged because "he thinks can 'fix' us" served as a ready reason to shift the discussion away from the content of the suggestion to a gossip session about the immorality of the speaker. Once again, the messenger was considered first, not the message.

This practice proved to be particularly problematic for those inside the system who wished to push for reforms. Teachers readily criticized their peers who put themselves above and thus outside the mean, stating that they were only going after personal glory in championing a proposed reform. Paradoxically, this created a conflict of interest for those teachers who wanted to see a particular reform come to Central. In order to disassociate their persons (and thus the personal grudges and antagonisms against them as representatives of particular families or social cliques) from the proposed reform, proponents found themselves talking about state people/experts and "their" reforms. This way of distancing their persons from the proposal only exacerbated the already prevalent sentiment that the interests of the state reformers were at odds with local interests. "Furrin" [foreign, i.e. from Pennsylvania or even California] experts were seen as pushing alien reforms on the local district and the local teachers (whose ranks included the proponent). Once a reform measure lost its local sponsor in the public discourse, it seldom had much of a life left. Even when enthusiasm for the measure was maintained through personalized, face to face discussions, it lacked the requisite majority support to pass a faculty vote and make it to a site based council vote. Such was the fate of block scheduling at Central.

Barriers to Gaining Expertise

The capacity to thoughtfully and analytically reflect on information generated outside of Hickory County will continue to be important to sustained attention on the most pressing problems at Central High. But such reflection remains particularly difficult to facilitate. One of the first cited, but perhaps not the most important, reasons is access to diverse opinions and resources. As of this writing, the technological state of affairs at Central exemplifies a very short-sighted frame of reference. The district has proven itself unwilling to make the (admittedly considerable) financial investments in a working phone system for Central that allows teachers long-distance access. How are teachers to reach the parents of their students, not to mention the KERA Regional Service Center or even the state capitol? This is a inexcusable constraint given the fact that the telephone company has divided Hickory County into several "local service areas." The result is that it is an intermediate-rate long distance call from Central to the southern end of the county.[1] Only the Youth Service Center has electronic mail, and that only as of the final writing of this dissertation. Internet access is all but unheard of. The local cable company and utility company have been promising access to the Information Superhighway for years, but residents remain too skeptical to predict a date. Students, site-based committee members, and faculty at Central who wish to make contact with outside sources of expertise have to do so at their own expense and on their own time.

However, even if significant technological upgrades are implemented, as promised by the incoming superintendent, Central staff's foreshortened horizons still may not be pushed back. Moving back these barriers requires both the desire and ability to seriously consider non-local sources of information. The current parochial attitude is dangerous in that numerous feasible, adaptable options will continue to be overlooked simply because they arise outside the narrow field of vision of many at Central.

The Moral Dimension

Like a "leader" or "troublemaker," the label of "expert" is a multivalent symbol, the expression of differently valued kinds of learning a well as moral qualities. Being an expert first requires recognition of one's status by one's peers and/or certifiers. It also requires the ability to effectively generate a following for one's proposals. This second essential component is where many external experts fall short; they lack the requisite social networks to carry through with reforms. When proposing an initiative at Central High, e.g. an incentive program linked to attendance and grades, committee members needed to seek out those colleagues who were well-connected to business people who could donate prizes, civic club members who could sponsor awards, etc. They needed to seek out those faculty and staff who had something to exchange with business people and civic leaders, be it tickets to the boys' basketball games, the hint of continued patronage, or more careful consideration of a kinsperson's employment application. While these kinds of informal bartering may seem manipulative or exploitative, they reinforce the interdependence between local (elite) groups in a county where such perks are few and are, therefore, valuable. Further, these teachers' expertise in building community support that extends past the classrooms and corridors of Central is key in making the initiative work. They have the common knowledge to make the standardized book knowledge meaningful. In summary, being an expert is considerably more than a matter of diplomas, it is at heart a social role.

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[1] It is a fascinating commentary on the profit consciousness of the long-distance phone utility in an age of deregulation that residents of the more populous, affluent, southern edge of the county could make phone calls without encountering this "local service area" barrier. They could make calls throughout Hickory County and the neighboring areas with only a basic fee. However, the Florida-based operator explained to me, it was not "worth it" for the company to provide the same service to the less affluent majority in the southern part. Further, the phone service provided to the poorer residents does not include basic customer services that customers elsewhere, including in the southern part, take for granted. Thus, those who would most benefit from enhanced access and service are those least likely to have them. Further, the vagaries of the national telephone utility that serves Hickory County has customer service agents based in Florida who have little to no understanding of what it takes to place a call from one remote end of the county to the other. Nor do they understand that for most of the spring, flash flooding of the creeks and bottoms can wreck havoc for the 80 percent of county residents who even have a phone.

Unfortunately, many (outside) experts are not seen as having the moral qualities it takes to effectively play this role in Hickory County. An expert, most Hickory Countians fear, is someone who believes he or she has all the answers, prefers changes that will make Appalachian Hickory County more like mainstream white America, cultivates ties and allegiances to external authorities, and needs neither a network of local people nor their "backwards" mountain ways. This way of constructing an expert expresses one of the most important ways that lines are drawn between "outsiders" and "insiders," those who would change the community and those who are community builders.

Internal Experts

A local person can be designated an "outsider" based on his or her role as an expert. A parent, even one who is connected to school board members and local business leaders, may become an outsider if he or she is outspoken in site-based council meetings and suggests, for example, switching coal heating providers or contractors because it would save a considerable sum of money. Local insiders face special pressures not to make decisions primarily based on efficiency, but rather, because they do know local actors they are asked to make decisions bearing in mind the individuals involved. Local insiders are expected to know the score, that is, who is owed what favor, whose husband is out of work and thus should be given preference for a job, who is a Central alumna/us and thus should be given special consideration, etc. Although local insiders have the common knowledge to work with kin, friends, and business associates, they may, ironically, be less likely to use them to build support for their reforms because these same ties may pressure them to maintain the status quo. In Hickory County, suggestions for reform that come from the inside are perhaps even more resented than external mandates for change because local people are expected to understand the ethic of non-intervention in others' affairs. This is especially true regarding non-interference with those who are at the very top of the local social pyramid. In addition, they are expected to know better than to act like an expert who charges that the status quo is not good enough for them. They should not be "getting above their raising" and publicly demanding more than what they have been allotted.

Paradoxically, the technical complexity of the KERA reform makes it more difficult for those (insiders) who wish to implement reform to do so without seeming like "experts." A great deal of professional development and training is necessary, whether for teachers implementing performance based assessments and scoring portfolios, or for superintendent screening committee members learning how to take on this new role. In order to share ideas about new programs, leaders need to refer to other programs in operation elsewhere, use jargon and terms new to KERA, introduce pedagogical concepts and names for activities, and report on the activities of official state education agencies that have been reorganized and renamed since the passage of KERA. Use of each of these specialized forms of knowledge distances them from those who do not have the same information or access to the same sources of information.

Another difficulty faced by internal experts is the appropriate use of language to present information and to generate support. Hickory Countians are well aware that they speak a non-standard, and therefore lower status, dialect of American English. Although this can be a liability in being seriously listened to when outside the county, the reverse is true regarding conversations within the county. In order to be heard, an expert must speak in a way that creates affinities with the listeners. In contrast, someone who "talks proper" is perceived as creating distance, of acting like she or he is above others. In attempting to reach their audience, stakeholders drew on local speech practices of prefacing their remarks with humble disclaimers. Mr. Eaves, a well-educated parent, would say for example, "Now I don't know much about this, but . . ." In this way, he was reinforcing himself as an expert in the ways of speaking and relating to listeners that showed that he should be taken seriously.

In addition, the complexity of the KERA reforms has also contributed to difficulties in broadening the base of participants. This trend has been further exacerbated by the previous unwillingness of county school administrators to help parents learn about new opportunities to become involved and how to exercise their new rights. In effect, while the democratic decision-making structures instituted in KERA, including the site-based councils and superintendent screening committee explored in this thesis, may have increased the number of participants in the discourse about education in Hickory County, it has not significantly diversified the kinds of people participating. For the most part, it is still high-school or even college-educated, employed parents of Central students who feel able to participate. Those who are most likely to join site-based councils in the first place are those who have the requisite literacy, public speaking, and advocacy skills to understand the KERA mandate as well as to discuss it in public. The end result may be that decision-making may not really be democratized, rather one set of local elites may just be substituting for another set. When these stakeholders did not have the information that they needed, they had the phone service, car, even private computer access necessary to seek out the facts, statistics, department of education data, and training that they required. They may not (yet) feel like experts, but at least they are participating in the dialogue.

The concern remains that these participants have been ostracized because of their participation, thus further distancing them from the peers who they are supposed to represent. Many of Central's faculty and staff believed that any parent who would get involved had to be out for their own enhanced status or personal revenge; they could not possibly speak for the interests of a wider constituency. Teachers who were upset about the increase in parental involvement asserted that these "parents in no way represent the average Hickory County parent." And, in their opinion, these stakeholders should become more like those good "common folks" who keep their own house in order and do not meddle in school affairs. It is not surprising that few parents were willing to venture into such an overtly hostile environment.

While even these most involved parents often felt intimidated to speak freely or to become informed about KERA, the reluctance they felt to get involved is only a mere fraction of the hesitation experienced by less literate, less schooled, and less well connected parents. Many of the parents of troubled teens whom I met expressed the desire to believe that their children's teachers knew what they are doing. They felt unable to help their teens with homework and felt decidedly uneasy going into the school to pick them up, much less talking to a teacher or principal about what they should do, together, to address the young person's problems. "They're the expert" stated one of these young mothers, using the rationale to explain away her own lack of agency.

The rift between the "average parent" and teachers is further widened by Central teachers' convictions that parents are not and cannot be legitimate experts about their children's education. Again and again, Central staff and faculty spoke of the "the average Hickory County parent" as unsuccessful in their own schooling, unconcerned (as evidenced by the fact that they did not come to conferences if and when these were held), supportive of truancy and dropping out, and more concerned about maintaining their welfare and SSI eligibility (which was bolstered by their teen's poor grades which proved he or she could not support himself) than their children's success in school.

Teachers' construction of parents as "uneducated" reveals a further set of disturbing tendencies in their perceptions of these potential partners. Here, the operative definition of being educated was having completed high school. This minimal standard was relevant because it in itself eliminates half of the adult population. While 42 percent of adults have less than a ninth grade education, a mere 8 percent of Hickory Countians have a four year degree or higher. A large portion of these were professionals within the county school system. Ironically, teachers complained that parents should not and could not tell them what to do because they did not have the credential that made them legitimate discussion partners. Challenges for change from these non-experts were seen as personal affronts to teachers who considered themselves the only ones with the requisite knowledge to make informed choices about how, if, and whom to teach. But many of these same teachers were opposed to parents gaining exactly that kind of expertise that would equalize the playing field. Some teachers vehemently rejected the notion of educating interested parents in en vogue pedagogical practices such as open-response writing or heterogeneous grouping as encouraged by KERA specialists. This is in line with their resistance to listening to their peers, professional development speakers, or state department professionals who did have these credentials. Any of these groups challenged their complacency. But peers and parents were easier to put down than state officials, hence the former were ridiculed, silenced and antagonized and the latter were met with silence or avoided as much as possible.

Despite these challenges, those who became stakeholders in school reform at Central maintained a resilient sense of their mission. They saw themselves as working "in the best interest of the children" and evoked this slogan often in their justifications for action. The Superintendent Screening Committee even imprinted "Working for the Children of Hickory County" on their goldenrod envelopes. The strength that they gained from a sense of being persecuted because of their actions contributed to their desire to stand steadfast. Paradoxically, the less support they perceived from the local cadre of learned teachers, the more parents felt that they were working on behalf of the "common man" or the "truth." Mr. Jenkins, one of the many lay preachers who took an active interest in education at Central, explained that those who speak the truth or who point out inconsistencies are seldom appreciated. But, they should consider themselves in good company, he pointed out, for "even Jesus was not welcome in his own land."

External Experts

By far, state-level experts, not local people, were the ones most commonly seen as "outsider-experts." These reformers came to the Hickory County schools in several capacities: as Distinguished Educators sent in to bring schools designated as being "in crisis" according to their KIRIS scores back into compliance with official expectations for achievement; as OEA investigators sent in to audit books and monitor practices; as professional development instructors; as independent site-based decision-making trainers; as consultants for the superintendent screening committee. But even though they have played more marginal roles in the story of reform in Hickory County than particular local actors have, these external, outsider experts play important symbolic roles because they epitomize for many in Hickory County the most negative attributes of an expert. While few of the state investigators or professional development instructors embodied all or even most of the characteristics that they were assumed to possess, the enduring assumption of guilt was enough to satisfy local stakeholders' needs to cast them as the collective enemy.

First, Hickory Countians were fond of stating that these "furriners" did not understand what life was like in Eastern Kentucky. They could not be correct. Therefore, many of their proposals fell on deafened ears. For example, evaluators suggested that the school contract with the health department to provide a nurse through the Youth Service Center (YSC). But the YSC already employed an independent nurse who was well liked by students and staff and who had developed a healthy rapport with the female students who were her most frequent visitors. However, the argument was that in addition to saving money, a nurse employed by the health department could dispense information about contraceptives that otherwise was restricted by the board of education. However, once again, Central staff refused to implement the plan on the grounds that the person was more important that the policy.

A second example of not fully understanding or responding to the concerns of those who take the risk of speaking out was mentioned by Central staff who expressed their reluctance to bring matters of concern to the state. In the past, they argued, when someone complained to a state official, that expert problem solver took the matter not to the local plaintiff, but to the superintendent. By backing up their call by repeating the claim and mentioning the name of the plaintiff, the state person jeopardized the plaintiff more than they may have known. For it was widely believed that such a "troublemaker" might not be rehired, might be moved to another school, or might be called in and warned not to stir things up. Such actions did not need to be frequent to be potent. Even years after the most recent such retaliation the threat of such action was enough to influence decisions and remain a topic of teachers' lounge gossip. The "problem" was that the plaintiff had violated the norm of not keeping the issue within the family, but rather took it to an "expert" to solve. Other local versions of this story assign considerably more blame to the state officials, who, rather than being cast as naive as to eastern Kentucky politics, were seen as using local systems of retribution to limit the number of complaints to which state officials had to respond.

The feeling that state officials are transient, "political" professionals is a common one, especially among the top Hickory County administrators. Central High faculty, sitting in their lounge drinking Pepsi, were fond of stating of the Commissioner of Education who hailed from California, "He was on his surfboard before KERA, and he'll be back on his surfboard long before we're rid of it."[2] In the meanwhile, they believe, external evaluators really are not invested in the success of the district but rather are motivated to create a situation in which they seemingly have no choice but to intervene. Such definitive action on behalf of poor, rural children would legitimized their assertion of the state's right to intervene in similar situations in the future.

This sense that external experts lacked vital commitments was compounded by the lack of evidence that they were connected to a particular place, for instance, the mountains of Hickory County. Because external reformers do not readily hail from a specific place and/or identify with only one particular group, they are seen as having few substantial ties, and hence, being shiftless and rootless. Being mobile, even transient, indicates for Hickory Countians that these outsiders have too few long-term commitments. Therefore they cannot be trusted. In contrast, Hickory Countians, while certainly not all committed to the same set of people, are seen as understanding the importance of ties and mutual obligations. While one of Central's teachers may believe that another teacher will never stand with him or her, at least he or she is convinced that the other person stands for something they both value, namely, enduring ties of relationship and reciprocity.

That the state has not, as of this writing, attempted a full scale take over of the Hickory County school system is only somewhat problematic for those who would use the state as a common enemy against which to rally otherwise scattered local forces. Because a few strategic nearby counties have indeed been taken over, the threat still seems real enough. The more abstract, even clandestine the threat, the most resilient and vigilant local people need to be; thus the less evident the threat the more powerful it becomes as motivation for continued resistance. Further, identifying an external governmental body as a common enemy has a long tradition in Hickory County; these Appalachians are ready and willing to believe that local sovereignty in the mountains is once again in imminent danger.

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[2] Incidentally, soon after my initial fieldwork ended, Dr. Boysen indeed left his position in Kentucky and returned to California.

In lieu of a direct takeover in Hickory County, it seems that the state has opted for a tenuous partnership. This is not a retreat, but is directly in line with a basic precept of systemic reform, that is, the effective coupling of state-level mandates and assistance with bottom-up engagement and ownership. In Hickory County as elsewhere, this has proven to be a controversial liaison which is constantly being renegotiated. One of the key issues at stake is who counts as an expert about education at Central High. A second issue is how this expertise is shared in a mutually acceptable way.

It is critical to cultivate local expertise. Resistance to information flowing only from the outside in is understandable. Hickory County teachers, especially those who have been doing similar practices that predated KERA by decades, currently feel undervalued and overshadowed by external experts brought in to tell them what they must do or face sanctions by a further set of external experts. In the minds of the majority of Central High staff, change is only acceptable to a certain measure, and certainly not if it threatens to define local cognitive frameworks and power relations as "problems" that can only be solved by outsiders. By not only recognizing expertise locally, but by creating forums in which local people from throughout the region can build learning communities among themselves, state officials can contribute to the sustainability of reforms that could outlast their own tenure in a turbulent state political arena.

This sort of partnership requires that state exhortations for reform in Hickory County consist of more than written threats of full investigation or a sporadic visit by a particular program evaluator. Unfortunately, these seem to be the exclusive methods that the state monitors have chosen. The 15-plus percent daily student absentee rate at Central has recently come under closer scrutiny by state investigators. Perplexed by the persistent nature of this problem, they have a launched a volley of assaults on the local bookkeeping system, drop out prevention measures, and school policies. Occasionally, they make a day trip to the county. I encountered one of these frustrated state accountability officials when I returned to Central for follow-through fieldwork. His schedule was filled with appointments to look at books and talk to senior administrators. I asked him if he would like to meet any of the "statistics," and talk to them about why they were hard pressed to find convincing reasons to come to regularly classes at Central, what an education meant to them, how to get around being counted absent, and other topics that were regular items of my noontime "hangin out" sessions. He did not have the time, this "expert" declared, he needed to look at more numbers.[3] How much he might have learned.

Theme Four: "Numbers are Legitimating."

Numbers contain the power to operationalize "success," rank schools, highlight group characteristics, confer prestige, and declare bankruptcy. They legitimize intervention in "unsuccessful" districts; they justify giving rewards to "successful" ones. They define who are the "haves" and who are the "have-nots," they provide a basis, however suspect, of distinguishing between "us and "them." Because issues of assessment and accountability are so closely entwined in the Reform Act, numbers have taken on a life of their own in southeastern Kentucky.

Scores as Justifications for State Intervention

No story of reform in Kentucky in the mid 1990s would be complete without a discussion of the significant impact that KIRIS scores have had on local reform. In Hickory County, Central's low KIRIS scores were a motivating factor that gave faculty and principals ammunition in their struggle to mobilize even their most complacent colleagues to action. The danger of being declared "in crisis" was a wake-up call that got co-workers moving who would have preferred to continue what they were doing just long enough so they could retire. Even they, perhaps especially they, did not want external authorities to come in and investigate the kind of teaching that did or did not regularly happen at Central.

The structure of the KIRIS system also provided a benchmark for acceptable achievement. Those who sought the minimal amount of change were satisfied to accept the definition of satisfactory progress of reducing 10 percent of the gap between the actual and ideal scores in the KIRIS accountability system. If they just met that threshold, they could forestall unwelcome intrusion and resume their normal routines. Those who were intrinsically motivated to pursue excellence in their daily practices by conscience, professional dedication, and religious or ethical convictions, also acknowledged this minimal threshold as a starting point, but saw it as the minimum they wished to see rather than the maximum.

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[3] See the Appendix entitled Methodological Considerations for a discussion of key similarities and differences between this intensive, participatory fieldwork and the state's approach to information-gathering.

Getting the entire faculty and staff of Central moving the in same direction was no mean task. From the beginning of the KIRIS assessments, those teachers at Central who felt that things were "good enough" took their cues from the district and school administration and hoped that the Reform Act would soon be forgotten. They hoped that as long as they could ignore it or did nothing to enhance its success, it would prove to be a failure and be rescinded. When funding for KERA was renewed by the legislature, they proceeded to resist the test because these tests represented accountability to external authorities who imposed their own standards. These teachers hoped that they could contribute to the swift demise of the annoying tests if they refused to teach the skills tested or if they proved that the tests could not assess what they set out to ascertain. Faculty attempted to prove that the KIRIS assessments were worthless and that the students could not achieve high scores by telling their students that the tests were meaningless, rigged or impossible, and that it did not matter if they tried or not. When all else failed, faculty cited the three weeks of school that the students had missed just prior to the state-wide testing period because of flooding of county roads. They argued that such conditions made it impossible for them to teach or for their students to learn. The result was that scores that were a better reflection of these underlying trends than a measure of either students' potential or even current abilities. The scores would have been even lower had they not been lumped in with those students whose teachers did not have such ideological problems with these accountability mechanisms and who already included the kinds of activities KERA promotes (e.g. critical thinking, open-response questions, extensive writing, group work, and hands-on learning) in their teaching.

Although the individual test scores are the largest component, a school's total KIRIS score includes more than tests results. At the high school level these include such non-cognitive items as a measure of drop outs, attendance, and the variable "successful transition to adult life." These reflect faculty and administrative responses to individual student needs and students responses to written policies and actual practices. These areas have been particularly resistant to school leaders' efforts; in nearly 60 years, Central High has never graduated more than 57 percent of its entering ninth grade class four years later. Nevertheless, the school as an entity is judged on how well the collective leadership achieves in these areas. At Central this has led to some very interesting approaches to manipulating the numbers.

Part of what motivated Central staff to try to do well on these non-cognitive measures are increased financial resources available for districts such as Hickory through the SEEK equalization formula and technology initiatives of KERA. Although not all that were initially proposed have come, Central did receive much needed renovations in its physical plant. Most of these resources are directly proportional to student average daily attendance. As a result, there is more money available for everything from books to lab stations, to microscopes, to multimedia resources. Even the most complacent and resigned teachers were eager to have more supplies and aids. Those who regularly looked for teaching aides were more than pleased to learn new technologies and adapt their lessons. In faculty meetings another concern surfaced, namely, the number of staff a school can legitimately hire is also based on average daily attendance. In the past the principal and superintendent had purposely kept the school overstaffed with teachers and custodians above what the enrollment merited with the justification that the jobs were needed and they could offer better services for their students this way. However, staff were now worried that the state would take a hard line, especially with the plush custodial positions. Further, if Central was to offer competitive programs that would help lure back those students who chose to attend high school out of district rather than go to Central, they needed the per pupil money that these students currently take with them. Whereas before there were few resources and little incentive to increase daily enrollment, now kids count.

However, it is ironic to note that staff at Central count some students very differently than others. Because of the way that attendance and drop out rates are computed into the school's non-cognitive KIRIS index, and because of Central's high baseline of drop outs, it is actually more beneficial to remove a student entirely from the roster than to carry him or her as a chronic absentee. Faced with a precariously low non-cognitive index, Central staff discussed at the faculty meetings whether it might not be beneficial to encourage troublesome students to drop out as soon as possible if they looked like they were likely to establish a pattern of frequent absences. In this they knew that some parents would be willing partners; every few weeks a parent would accompany his or her child to school on their sixteenth birthday and, as their present, legally withdraw them from high school.

Another interesting if ironic way of resisting the intentions of KIRIS scores was their approach to testing. Schools are responsible to test all students who are listed on their rosters unless there is a verified (medical) reason not to do so. Students who are absent from testing are counted as scoring in the lowest possible category, novice. In the years of the first Accountability Cycle this has meant that with the current daily absentee rate, around fifteen percent of the potential tests takers in the accountability grades (twelfth and, later, also eleventh) automatically counted as "novices." In the 1994-1995 year, the principals and teachers made a much more concerted effort to get students to come to testing. They even called or otherwise tried to reach those who were absent. But having been through two rounds of KIRIS assessments before, students were hard to convince that they should take the tests any more seriously than their teachers as a whole did. Besides, students argued, if the test was just going to confirm how little they had learned, they might as well spent the testing week at home. The expectation of failure legitimated their continued lack of effort.

Distinguishing between " Us" and "Them"

Numbers in the form of statistics and scores have long been part of the discourse on education in Hickory County. In critical ways, they have provided the basis for teachers to distinguish themselves from the average Hickory Countian. Many, but not all of the teachers and staff attended either Central High or one of the neighboring districts. They hail from similar backgrounds as their students. But teachers perceive crucial differences between themselves and the majority of their students.

Central teachers consistently overestimate the negative attributes of students, their families, and communities, and underestimate those traits that they value in themselves. In discussions, and then statistically tested in a survey, teachers overestimated the number of students on free or reduced price lunch, the number of students from single parent homes, the number on welfare, and the percentage who drop out. In several instances they overestimated these attributes by as much as double the actual number. They underestimated the number of students who attend church regularly, who care passionately about the quality of education they receive, who hope to graduate, who hope to go to college or technical school, and who have friendships that they hope last well into their adult lives.

Because of the negative perceptions that Central teachers have of the average student, they try to distance themselves from those who most need their attention and active advocacy. Although a minority of faculty at Central have tried repeatedly to establish a mentor program that matches up students and faculty, the measure has gone down again and again. Too many faculty are unwilling to make the commitments of time and energy necessary to enable the faculty as a set to reach out to all students. Many of these same teachers do have their own favorite students whom they coach along, but they feel that the effort is wasted on students who, the argument goes, will just drop out anyway. What might all be done if their fate were not assumed!

These teachers exhibit what a colleague termed, "teacheritis," that is a self-referential world that neither acknowledges the challenges and strengths of the students, nor deems it important to learn. For them, becoming a teacher was just the last in a long string of actions that they saw as a natural course: one went to high school, graduated, went to college, got married, became a teacher, had a child and sent that child off on a similar trajectory. Because of this complacent attitude that assumes such a route is open for all, many are confirmed in their resistance to the idea that they are somehow to blame for half of their students' failure. The majority disengage further from needy students, stating of the young people, "*they* don't care." The result is that a minority of faculty do more than double duty as extra-curricular leaders, class sponsors, club organizers, coaches, and mentors.

The rest learn to ignore what they cannot deny. Although essentially all of the teachers at Central live in Hickory County or in one of the adjacent counties, on their way home they focus on their own lives and what they like about living in the region. Regarding the squalid living conditions of a series of houses that she must pass on her way home, Mrs. Raleigh confessed privately, "I just don't see it anymore. It just doesn't exist for me."

A similar choice about where they located themselves relative to others is reflected in some teachers' resistance to being included under the label "Appalachian" or "mountain." They resent the all too common perception that these terms connote only dire poverty, isolation, stubbornness, parochialism, lack of education, use of dialect and leave little room to also include generosity, commitment, care of family, connection to place, independence, and religious convictions. Teachers and some staff will say "I'm not Appalachian, but. . ." and then go on to describe the ways in which the lives they lead share elements in common with their poorest neighbors as well as have elements in common with the residents of larger cities like Lexington and Knoxville. As evidence that they do not fit the stereotype, most point instead to the accouterments of their middle class life, including television and cable, two cars, a computer, disposable income, a business wardrobe, a non-mobile home, trips to go shopping and attend professional basketball games in the cities, and regular vacations to the beaches of Florida and North Carolina. But rather than infusing these elements and material props into the definition of what it means to live in Appalachia at the very end of the 20th century, their disdain for the label only serves to perpetuate it as a caricature of real people. By not pointing out the diversity within their own county, but rather casting themselves as different, they reinforce for themselves as well as for outsiders a very narrow stereotype that hides much about the dualities, tensions, richness, and multiple, complementary identities of those who live in the mountains of Hickory County.

But many of these same teachers resist the label "middle class" as well. This curious phenomenon is not limited to those who teach. Two of the local college-educated professionals I interviewed who certainly would be at least middle class by most standard forms of accounting preferred to humbly refer to themselves as "blue collar," or "service" workers and stressed the repetitive, hands-on customer services that they provided. They did not want to seem to be too separate, too different, too mainstream in comparison to their roots and their peers. They did not want to be seen as identifying with the local view of the mainstream white person, that is, mobile, detached, rootless, material, competitive. But the very fact that these people had considerably more income and resources, traveled among a different social clique, and had close friends in positions of civic leadership put them indeed in a different social stratum than then majority of their students, customers, patients, and/or clients. Income and education could be a source of division and jealousy. So, for them to identify with being middle class meant to deny an affinity or connection with their less prosperous friends and family. It would mean to suggest that being like others would not be good enough, that they wanted more. They did not want to appear to be too different for fear of becoming disconnected to the place they called their "homeplace" and the people they called their "home folks." The result of these dual tendencies is ambivalence about where they belong in a stratified social system that, while powerfully divided, nonetheless values the appearance of equality. Teens at Central are keenly aware of these conflicting messages. They too were trying to decide how to carve out a niche for themselves, and whether that place can be within the social system of Hickory County or if they had best look elsewhere.

Reclaiming the Numbers

Despite the apathy, even animosity of some of their colleagues, a core group of teachers and staff at Central proved that they were unwilling to simply accept the statistics and KIRIS scores as definitions of either who they were or who they could be. Indeed, several actions provide evidence that faculty effectively used these same numbers to legitimate their claims that reforms were overdue and that they as a poor, rural, mountain district should be given priority for new funds and programs.

Teachers on the curriculum committee and staff at the Youth Service Center worked with Census and CD-ROM data about their county that I provided to write grant applications, program evaluations, and applications for awards. They used statistics that placed Hickory County among the worst in the state for teen pregnancy, drop out rates, and unemployment and underemployment. The numbers showed that problems with drug abuse rivaled that of inner cities. Writing these reports and applications meant that those using the numbers had to be willing to say that the numbers indeed represented them. They had to move from a resistance that the numbers were accurate to a candid realization that they did represent the present, but need not be predictors of the future. Through the act of working for a different future, they reinforced among themselves that sense that this is not what the future had to look like. By taking a hard, critical look at where they stood, they gained the strength to decide where they wanted to go.

Caution in Interpretation

Evaluators who wish to assess Central High's progress by looking at numbers need to realize that the new accountability measures may not behave in anticipated ways, especially during the unsettled initial phases of reform.

Certainly, credit has to go to those administrators, staff, teachers, parents, and students who worked hard on the 1995 KIRIS assessments. In just one year, Central High was able to achieve nearly its entire accountability index. They lack less than one percentage point of improvement to reach the threshhold that they have two years to meet. It will require sustained effort to keep the students achieving at higher levels, but they have shown that the standards are within reach. These results are significant and are evidence of the tenacity and resilience of teachers who will not take "we're just poor Appalachians, we can't do any better" for an excuse. Also significant are the many things that are not accorded a number. Significant changes are going on deep under the superficial gloss of averages: more people became stakeholders and identified problems that they would target, together, for reform. This is no small accomplishment. A faint afterimage may appear in the KIRIS scores, but it is a weak reflection of the real changes that preceded, and indeed were prerequisites for, these improved scores.

Like increases in test scores, decreases may also mask important facts. Decreased test scores, drops in the required non-cognitive measures, and plummeting morale may be symptoms of more fundamental shifts in power that are being negotiated. In this period where it seems that public "problems" were created where none existed before, stakeholders may retaliate against those who they see as creating problems for them. As in the case of Central High, students struck back at those who codified and then enforced disciplinary rules by burning the bathrooms, slashing a teacher's tires, being delinquent, and dropping out at a rate more than double the previous year's rate. Teachers retaliated against a new administration that asked for accurate attendance accounting by faking reports, not filing forms, banishing students from their classes, and being absent themselves. Some of these practices did not show up in accounting systems, or the numbers masked what was happening. Some practices resulted in worsened KIRIS non-cognitive scores, e.g. in drop outs and overall attendance. What is going on at deep structural levels is vitally important. Because defining and addressing problems challenges long-standing hierarchies of authority, these issues will not soon be resolved. As so as long as some teachers and students feel that they are being threatened by the reforms, some of Central High's numbers may well get worse before they get better.

Theme Five: "Knowledge is Power."

Having knowledge is powerful. Sharing knowledge generates even more strength and solidarity. Passing knowledge around until it attains the status of myth or nostalgia gives it potency that can last for generations.

Knowledge as a Valuable Commodity

Central High staff and faculty recall a very recent time when information was jealously guarded. The exemplary case was the school board meetings. Past practices came to light when contrasted with how board meetings were handled by Interim Superintendent Kennedy. These were important rituals of reassurance, that is, reassurance that there was a veneer of democracy, but also reassurance that decisions were already made well before the meeting ever happened. Board members felt that they had to approve decisions without ever feeling able to ask for grounds or numbers to justify the proposed conclusion. The few spectators who bothered to show up had no idea what actually would be covered. They lacked the information about how to effectively get their concerns on the agenda. The absence of written policies reinforced the informal, insider nature of knowledge. Those who did not know the rules were afraid to ask. What rules were known, e.g. that all employment applications should be kept on file in a certain place for a certain time, were flagrantly ignored.[4] You had to know someone in order to know what was going on.

Information about KERA was seen as a particularly valuable and at the same time dangerous commodity. Therefore, it was hoarded at the district level and seldom trickled out to the principal, much less instructor level. Teachers at Central knew little about KERA before 1994, simply that it had been decreed from afar, represented yet another attempt by the state to intervene in local affairs, and had generated some additional funds, including moderate teacher salary increases. More than that, their superiors decided, they need not know.

The conflict that arose over the site-based decision to hire outsider Newmann as the new principal illustrates how little most faculty understood about the new decision-making structure. Site-based councils had been instituted in the county schools, not because there was a commitment to increasing the number or diversity of teachers or parents involved in decision-making, but because it was a prerequisite for getting the funds which the plaintiffs had wanted in the first place. Although Central's SBC has been in place, it had not been able to accomplish much because teachers and senior administrators continued to flaunt their ability to do as they pleased regardless of a prior faculty vote. When the 1994 council selected Newmann as the new principal over a well-liked internal candidate, nearly all the teachers protested and demanded in their letter to the OEA that the council as an entity be dissolved. Although they had stated that they had nothing against the new appointee personally, the dissenting teachers declared, it was a matter of principle. What was the point of a body that neither represented well-placed teachers' interests nor had the authority to enforce compliance with its own mandates for discipline, attendance, etc.? However, the teachers' request to the state to be rid of this body resulted in the state asserting that according to the new law, once a school had voted to have a council it could not remove it. Ironically, the teachers' resistance only piqued the OEA's interest in investigating why there was so much local opposition to this representative body. Rather than increasing teachers' autonomy, it brought them under greater scrutiny.

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[4] My own application to be a substitute teacher through the Youth Service Center (the position that gave me official status at Central) was "lost" three times. I had to refile the police report, letter, and transcripts. In the entire year that I was there, no definitive appointment was ever made.

Lack of information about the specifics of the law as well as the stinging result of having brought the matter to the state's attention fueled Central staff members' resistance to formally raising any further challenges. A significant majority within the school began the 1994-1995 school year resentful of the very existence of the new administration, wary of further state actions, and determined to resist any compliance with the SBC that might help bolster it as a legitimate representative body. Instead, they channeled their creative efforts and criticisms into alternative spaces of discourse.

Alternative Discourses

Non-formal yet highly organized spaces for discourse flourish. These provide important alternatives to the school buildings. Most of the dozen or so distinct communities in the county still have a gas station, laundry-mat, small grocery store, and at least a couple of other places of business. Most people also come to the post offices to check their P.O. box as a sizable portion of county residents do not have an individual mailbox by their isolated homes. Each of these are important meeting places where people come not only to pick up needed supplies, but also to catch up on the news from the center of the county. Scattered throughout the county are private beauty shops run by women entrepreneurs that also are regular nodes of communication. Alternative spaces can also coalesce spontaneously. I got caught up in one when we had to wait most of an hour for a crew to teeter a mobile home off the hillside road and turn it down a gravel lane. It was to eventually find its final spot on the far bank of the creek down in the valley below. Motorist simply shut off their engines, got out of their cars, haywagons, and sport-utility vehicles and got caught up. It is in such remote places, rather than through the infrequent school forums or the non-existent school-home newsletters, that marginal participants are caught up in the loop of information.

What happens in the public schools, the county's largest employer and one of its most prominent institutions, is of general concern. Whatever happens in the Hickory County schools is soon a matter of county-wide speculation and discussion. The supposedly uneducated and "not caring" average parents ravenously consume what their neighbors and friends bring to share. What is the OEA up to? When is the state coming in? Why has my daughter's application to be a teacher been "lost," for the *third* time?!? Why was *he* selected for superintendent? The average person want to know.

Likewise, at Central there are private meeting places where different clusters of people meet. On any given morning, one of the most important things to do as the day begins is to share knowledge. Smokers in the "skanks" clique hang out by the exhaust stacks from the coal furnace. Smokers in the "preps" clique dominate the upstairs hall ways and first floor bathrooms. "Nobodies" gather in numerous small groups throughout the school and in the chilly morning air where their buses arrive. School bus drivers linger on the old vinyl bus station seats in the drivers' den, warming their hands over coffee. Cooks chatter over the clank of trays being cleaned from the sticky corn syrup of breakfast. Teachers are split into numerous small factions, each making final preparations for going off into their respective corners to work. The teachers meet casually, gathering their mail from the lounge, sitting with colleagues, standing in clusters in the halls doing hall duty, preparing for their day to start. As the 5 minute bell rings, some have yet to arrive.

The administrators and staff in the main office rush about, gathering times, notices, scores, and official announcements. These will be read over the intercom system during the 10 minute homeroom that leads off the day. But some teachers do not quiet their classes down enough to listen. Others talk right over that "principal who we did want anyway." Others try to listen despite the clanging locker doors and shuffles that still echo through the hallways. Still others never had an intercom hooked up to their room. They are left to wonder. One of the regular practices instituted in the 1994-1995 year was a daily memo that repeats the morning announcements and lists the 120 plus absentees of the previous day. This sheet aids those who care about official notices, but is instant wastepaper basket fodder for others.

In the alternative spaces, people actively create knowledge. That is, in the face of minimal official information, they generate their own understandings of what is happening. They want, and need to know, about the personal relationships, ties and assumed obligations, reasons, and benefits of those who are taking action. As parent Mr. Dalton said, by creating a likely theory about what is happening, they gain the power to predict and cope with what they believe is coming down the line.

Further, in these laundry-mats and stores, county residents construct a resilient sense of self that stands in opposition to what teachers "know" about them. The parents are, in their stories, the agents, the important ones in their childrens's' education, the ones who should be listened to. Teachers tell similar stories -- with the protagonists reversed. But in these scattered spaces, the speakers are the one who hold the power to convey authority, for they hold the power to pronounce the "the truth."

A key aspect of creating knowledge is that it is not merely information, but legitimate information. "There's a different between gossip and good gossip," stated Mrs. McCormick, "good gossip is gossip with the facts!" What experts, outsiders, state people, even educational leaders say about what is happening is suspect simply because of who the messenger is assumed to be. On the other hand, information from one's own trusted peer group is automatically assumed to be of better quality. It seems more reliable, practical, and trustworthy. Even if the information a friend conveys is faulty or incomplete, it is assumed to be offered with the best of intentions; that is what make it "truthful."

Building on the ethic exemplified by the "good old boy" code, people do not publicly contradict one another's stories. While listeners may disagree, when together they will likely agree to agree. This applies whether the information shared encourages risk-taking, or reinforces the notion that retaliation is imminent and there is little prospect of change. Listeners reinforce the resilient, and paradoxically, reassuring, beliefs that, for instance, that the system is rigged against poor people, that there is little they can do to better their situation, that those in leadership will never listen, that their children are learning "nasty" things out behind the school. As long as there is no chance for change, they are also affirmed in their decision not to become involved. Thus while these alternative spaces can provide opportunities for the marginal to critique those in positions of influence, they can also provide the settings for discussions that mutually reinforce the futility of becoming involved.

There is an widespread mistrust of information generated by the state, principal Newmann, or other such dubious outsider sources. Staff see those who wish to press for reform of the school as only forwarding on that information which supports their position. The reports that they offer at faculty meetings are therefore suspect. The official accounts of what and why something happened seem to be "smokescreens" to cover the real story behind the scenes. This goes for whether the author is one of Central's principals or the head of the OEA. Stakeholders, even those who may have agreed with the actual reform proposed, e.g. block scheduling, felt that there was more going on that they just did not know about. They resisted believing that they were being given all the information or a fair chance to become involved. This attitude enabled them to maintain a the stance that what is said in public does not reflect the "true" intentions of the speaker. In fact, from many Central staff members' perspectives, the fact that something is written should be taken as evidence that something quite different is actually meant.

A further result of most parents and community members' resistance to participate in formal discussions is that the rift widens between "their" alternative spaces and "the school's" forums. Why should they bother to get involved if they have information of their own that came from reputable sources? As long as they believe that the other group does not want to listen, each side is, in their own minds, justified in not listening to the other. And, further complicating matters and ultimately impeding the free exchange of ideas about reform, is the rumor that if they listened to another side it might connote a distrust of their own network. Few forums in the 1994-1995 were able to cross these boundaries. But once there, participants found that they indeed shared ideas, e.g. about locating an insider candidate for superintendent, the importance of stimulating local employment opportunities, the need to repair and raise the roads in several sections of the county, etc.

Another common discussion topic in the various alternative spaces is the use and content of nostalgic stories. Sharing information about the present and future among those with whom one shares a common past can contribute to an enhanced and creative construction of a nostalgic past. Such is the case with the stories told about one-room schools, the last handful of which were disbanded in 1972. These accounts of the "old days" play a key role in generating resistance to change. Or, when the tales focus on the lack of supplies and isolation of teachers, they can reinforce the desire to change. The stories tell of a better past, a time "when we had one room schools and the paddle" and when "teachers and parents respected each other." The underlying sense was that Hickory County used to be more cohesive, and although they had it rough, at least they were mostly in the same boat. Although even the most avid admirers of one room schools admitted that they were hard-pressed, the main thing was that people pulled together and sacrificed for their local schoolhouse and teacher. "They did the best with what they had" is the proud slogan. Evidence of such resilience inspired modern stakeholders to do their best with what means, support networks and resources they had. For listeners, this nostalgic backdrop provides evidence that Hickory County schools were once equal to other rural districts, and that the ways in which they have fallen behind need only be temporary. The sense that they once had an enviable school system bolsters stakeholders' beliefs that it can be the case again.

Sharing is the Most Important Thing

The process of sharing knowledge is often more important than the "truth" of what is shared. The veracity or verifiability of a statement is not what is most important. The critical element is that one is included in a circle of insiders who work together to keep one another appraised of what can be known in a situation of great uncertainty.

Teachers who viewed the photocopied flyers or who joined in ritual insults in the teachers' lounge saw which people were chosen as honorary victims of these methods of communicating status. Rather than being simply derogatory, nearly all of such exchanges pointed to some idiosyncrasy that endeared the person to the group. Principal Newmann, who you might think would be the butt of many such jokes, was indeed criticized, but he was not included in jokes as a friendly fool or a protagonist. Flyer makers did not consider him to be "one of us" enough to be included as a figure on one of their flyers. It is likely that he might not have understood such inclusion as an honorary badge of belonging.

Sharing also indicated whose networks one belonged to, and hence, who one could count on to look out for common interests. Sharing knowledge generates strength. Knowing that there was a network of people with whom one shared a version of a story, or who would support your version, contributed to the authority and confidence with which teachers or students spoke about a policy reform, a fight, an absence from school, a conflict, or a proposal. Knowing who would stand beside you and take your side in a faculty meeting or, for students, when called in to the principal's office was important to know before one entered into a risky conflict. School reform was certainly such a risky venture.

Being part of a knowledge-sharing network can be personally very empowering. The ease with which one can find out useful information was seen as being in sharp contrast to relations with those of the educational elite. Parents, both those who had little to no contact with Central and those who were highly involved, reported that sharing what information they could glean was important. Neither group felt able to go directly to those in the top administration and ask for a frank appraisal of the current and impending situations. Those in the former group assumed that they would be too intimidated to go in the first place; the latter group harbored suspicions that their request for information would result in being shunned as "troublemakers" and given a non-answer meant to placate them. Neither felt comfortable asking questions. In the process of taking a stake in the educational outcomes of Central, this was a skill that stakeholders had to practice.

Learning to Ask Questions

Because knowledge is both the means to gaining advantage or influence as well as an ends in itself, generating knowledge oneself is an exercise in exercising power. Stakeholders began from a position of relative ignorance about KERA, although many, especially those with education degrees, were well-versed in other reform initiatives and various pedagogical styles. Newmann's expertise about the reform was welcomed by those who wanted more information. He provided a conduit for the latest information and initiatives in KERA to pour in to Central. But his wisest move was to encourage external professional developers and staff to come in and teach about portfolio scoring, site-based decision making rules, etc. rather than acting like an expert himself. In these training sessions staff felt more comfortable asking questions of these people who they felt were properly informed and were going to leave than they were with Newmann who might see them as vulnerable, ignorant, and if he were so inclined, as exploitable.

However, other leaders with whom they were to share power were not nearly as prepared to welcome questions. Parents who got involved were taunted with threats of retribution, were harassed about why they were bothering school personnel, were ignored, were slighted in public, and as especially the women found, they were told that they could not understand the complex new SEEK formulas and KERA regulations. Questions, even from a well-educated person, were seen as intrusive and not staying in one's place. Leaders resisted pressures to hold public forums and ask for community input before telling their board members what decision to make. Particularly with the state hovering overhead, they felt that they had little choice. Other community members, board members, and educators felt that the once streamlined decision-making process had become all together too complicated. As one parent summed, dreading a public hearing about a proposed building program to remodel or replace Central, "Now that everyone is supposed to have a say, people think that they have to *have* something to say, that they should have *their* say."

Asking questions remains a risky business, especially for those inside the system. The long-term gains for taking the risk of acting as though you have a right to be involved are not clear. Those stakeholders who were related to people in elected or appointed positions of authority had a lot to lose for speaking out. Social pressures, both subtle and blatant could be imposed. But, paradoxically, they and their children also had the most to gain, for if their high school offered a more challenging curriculum, fair access to classes was granted, and students made life-long friends of peers and adults while in school, they were more likely to be able to successfully pursue further education and a career that, their parents hoped, could be practiced locally.

Asking questions as an outsider is no less complicated. However, people from other places, whether the next county, the state capitol, or even California, are expected to be too forward, indelicate, and hard to dissuade. Insiders assume that the questioners have some political motive that gives them a reason to be interested at all. From experience, Central folks have learned that in the eyes of the superior expert this motive need not be shared with those being investigated. Another problem with "outsiders who nose around in our business" is there are few social pressures that one can bear to silence them. One of the few means of resistance available is silence or strategic misinformation. If the person was seen as evaluating them in an impersonal way and could impose sanctions, the accuracy and complexity of what they told these investigators is questionable.[5] However, if the researcher is seen to share a long-term concern for the community, respects local ways of working, does not come across as an expert, explains motivations, shares results, encourages local people to ask their own questions, and seeks complex and conflicting answers the quality of what is shared can be considerably better.

Surveys are another way of asking for information. In the past, Central had participated in several surveys required as conditions of participation in county special programs. An example is the annual survey on drug use among students required by the substance abuse coordinator. They had also participated in a Effective Schools survey of parents, teachers, and students. However, that particular instrument was initially requested, designed, administered, and then tabulated by an external source. The school had been sent a copy of the results. But no one could readily locate the results, no one had asked what the results might mean in relation to reforms that they were interested in proposing.

In sharp contrast stands the survey created, administered, and analyzed by the superintendent screening committee (SSC). They worked hard to identify priorities, write them in a neutral manner, and to make sure that all eligible district employees (over 700) and a subsample of high school students received a copy. Although less than a third responded, this response rate was deemed to be highly significant, despite the hasty opinion of Mr. Lawlor, the school board's consultant. Within a context which did not regularly reward being outspoken, the response indicated that people were willing to state their opinions. Further, their participation in the survey and at the forum conveyed that respondents found the SSC to be a credible enough body that they wanted to supports its work in their interests. Certainly, many employees, including most of those who worked in the central office nearest the superintendent, felt that the survey was a waste of time and did not complete one. But, even they acknowledged that the SSC had become more visible and credible through the effort. Knowing that the interview questions they devised directly reflected the priorities in the surveys gave sense SSC members the knowledge that they were right. They felt empowered to speak on behalf of those who had become their constituents. The respondents had taken a stake in answering questions, the SSC had declared their interests in the public by responding to them. Even when the board ultimately chose another top candidate, the SSC maintained a buoyant, resilient sense of integrity because they had ventured to ask questions.

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[5] See the discussion in the Appendix on methods in which I compare and contrast my approach and the response it generated with the state's.

How can faculty and staff at Central replicate the successful elements of these surveys? First, the questions should make use of meaningful vernacular and be readable on a eighth grade or lower level. The questions should be readily recognizable as addressing key issues and not bring in extraneous, frivolous items. It should be worth the respondents' time to answer these thoughtful questions. Items should be straightforward, but ask for answers that can express the diversity of opinions rather than simply dividing respondents into "yes" and "no" camps. Certainly, it helps to have a "neutral" body, person, or agency administer the surveys and keep track of the responses. If a high response rate is desired, someone needs to be able to identify non-respondents, cajole their participation, and then, most importantly, keep the results anonymous. A critical question for the future is how well Central faculty will be able to do this within their own ranks. The current level of factionalism and mistrust makes it unlikely that one group would be able to earn the respect of all enough to act as survey moderator.

Learning Not to Know

Possessing knowledge conveys power and prestige. What then does refusing to seek knowledge convey? For many at Central, ignorance is bliss. Or at least, it allows one to perpetuate the appearance of harmony and collegiality. While this may help the day go by easier, the result has been an overall atmosphere of apprehension and mistrust. Preferring (or pretending) not to know or notice is particularly destructive when just barely submerged beneath the veneer of civility lies a seething pool of resentment and suspicion.

Still, some refused to become participants in the public dialogue about local problems. They resisted becoming stakeholders in the pursuit of knowledge. For to contribute to the sense that there even was anything to talk about might, in itself, become a "problem" for the participants. One attempt to administer a survey exemplifies this conflict. Leaders of a community civic group refused to complete the survey among their extensive membership. However, this result should not be seen as a failure to generate information but, paradoxically, as opening a conversation about the overwhelming, frightening power of asking questions. They maintained that in a spring when the county was selecting a new superintendent, the state was threatening to "take us over," Central High led the evening news, and many of their members were in or would like to be in good standing with those who gave out jobs, they just could not afford to be seen as encouraging questions. To even discuss whether or not there were issues worth discussing was, in their view, taking sides. Not wanting to know was simply better. While recognizing that problem areas would likely emerge from the survey, they resisted becoming part of the solution. Their strategic choice only reinforced the impregnable conspiracy of silence erected to hide their problems from public sight.

At Central, there were also those who would rather not know. They did not want to become stakeholders. They wanted to work at a relatively good job they enjoyed (perhaps a few disdained) and to pick up their paycheck. They resented being called to faculty meetings, SBC meetings, SBC committee meetings, and the like. What was wrong, couldn't the new principal do his job? They longed for the days of the benevolent dictator. Then, if something did not go the way they wanted, they just blamed the person higher up. By not participating in the original decision, they could say that they had not been consulted and hence, did not have to comply. Under such a mindset, what then did they have gain from participating?

Refusing to know means refusing to accept responsibility. All teachers and staff had some sort of stake in what the young adults under their care were learning, be it ballads, business, or the birds and the bees. But few were actually stakeholders, that is, people who were sincerely concerned and took an active interest in what kind of future they were shaping for these young people, and hence, themselves. Just as the teachers and staff of Central have largely abandoned the public spaces of the school, leaving bulletin boards unchanged and walls undecorated, they have also retreated from participating as a faculty in public decision-making structures. They resisted in passive and active ways. As the year went on an increasing number of faculty members went from physically disrupting the weekly faculty meetings by shuffling papers and leaning back on their chairs with arms crossed in disdain to boycotting the meetings altogether. They showed their contempt for decisions made by their administrators and site-based council by not enforcing school rules or encouraging "problem kids" not to come to class. Further, they encouraged their students to flaunt their ability to resist these impositions by flagrantly breaking the rules. They worked out deals with troublesome students, saying that they would not be counted absent if they would just stay away from class. It was a system that seemed to benefit all sides; no one else knew and no one person was responsible.

But even if the teachers at Central High pretended not to see the flagrant abuse of school rules around them by both students and teachers, even if they pretended not to mind the inequitable distribution of resources, even if they preferred to close their doors and turn their attention inwards, the students knew. Neither group was truly innocent. They were jointly responsible for the condition of life at their school. In the end, both partners in this dance were cheating themselves.

Most students and many teachers also did not want to know about written rules, especially those that set out a code of disciplined conduct. Writing out school rules violated several important maxims. First, ignorance connotes innocence. Therefore, some reasoned, ignorance of the rules indemnified them from being part of the "problem." If there were no rules, there were supposedly no "problems." Second, rules proscribed particular actions. In the new discipline code passed at the beginning of the 1994-1995 year, students were not to wear hats in the classroom, wear T-shirts that bore the trademark of tobacco manufacturers, wear shorts that were "too short," were forbidden to engage in PDA's (public displays of affection), wander the halls without a pass, leave school grounds, fight, set fires, and, from the students' viewpoints, other such "repressive" limitations. Although some rules were vague, for the most part, enforcers now were clear about what they were to look for. Teachers on bathroom smoking patrol knew already what they were looking for, but violations became harder to overlook when everyone else also knew exactly what it was that students were not supposed to be doing.

Third, rules set up the expectation that everyone will follow them. Students knew all too well that faculty, custodians, and bus drivers smoked on school grounds. Anyone could smell the smoke and see the ashy remainders. It was too much to overlook or to pretend not to know. Students used their teachers' rule-bending as grounds for their own resistance. They challenged teachers who themselves smoked to turn in smoking students for disciplinary action.

Fourth, writing out what is generally known makes rules less arbitrary. One of the hallmarks of the old discipline code was that it was arbitrarily and harshly enforced, had no set targets, could be imposed at will, and had few actual limitations. As long as fights did not exceed a "reasonable" limit (in one young man's case twice a week), or the opponents cause further trouble, the principal did not cause them further trouble either. The advantage of this approach was that a person who was spared punishment felt, proponents hoped, obligated to do better and not to give the principal any more headaches. He was supposed to behave well, not for himself, but for the sake of compliance and friendship.

Fifth, codifying the rules made the official sanctions known to all. Then, if a certain student got more or less than the official amount, there was a basis for complaints. Students had long been treated very differently, and this practice continued. From administrators' perspectives, having set, written rules deprived them of the opportunity to convey special favors on students who they wanted to encourage or reward. Standardization lessened the rewarding, personal element of their jobs.

Sixth, teens and teachers were poised to prove that leaders could not tell them what to do. They had a stake in protecting their classroom or hallway autonomy for it gave them an essentially unsupervised place in which they pretty much could do as they pleased, whether for the good of students or to their detriment. Limits represented an unacceptable intrusion. A teen stated what he felt to be the pervasive attitude among his peers and a couple of his teachers, "If you give us limits, it just makes us want to rebel." Paradoxically, written rules made known what kinds of resistance were high status. Teens and teachers who wanted to prove that leaders and other teachers could not tell them what to do now knew clearly what was forbidden. All they had to do was push those buttons. And they were secure in the knowledge that many of their peers would turn their heads, preferring not to know.

Theme Six: "We are Mountain."

Undulating, fog enshrouded blue mountains dominate the Hickory County skyline. They extend as far as one can see in any direction. But they are much more than a perpetual reminder of the special qualities of this Appalachian homeplace. The ancient ranges are both setting and symbol (Fitchen, 1991) of Hickory Countians' struggle to endure and maintain a way of life that they cherish.

Mountains as Physical Boundaries

As the setting for these stories, the mountains of Hickory County create very real boundaries, both physical and cognitive, between those "inside" and those "outside." On a physical level, the steep hollers and absence of graveled roads over the top of mountain ridges create effective barriers, buffering residents from direct influence with the world beyond the region. As Shelly, a student summarized:

> The mountains are big fences that separate us from the rest of the world. The mountains surround our region and block out all other regions. Since there are mountains we can't see but only so far.

While the majority of even the poorest of households has a satellite dish or cable, television and radio reception can still be sporadic at best. Internet access is only available to those with the financial resources to purchase a computer, software, and private access through a commercial company. The relative isolation of most parts of Manchester County is compounded by the predominance of gravel and dirt roads in the more remote reaches of the county, the absence of any kind of public transportation, and the considerable traveling distance to cities of any great size. These distances are further exacerbated for the one family in five that does not have a car or who must rely on neighbors or kin for access to a shared phone line.

Those with few resources to go someplace else are in an especially vulnerable position vis-a-vis the schools. The county's public schools are in a powerful position as the near exclusive brokers of knowledge about and credentials to enter the world "out there." Unfortunately, many of the messages that students receive at Central construct the "outside" world as unpredictable, unfriendly, and unintelligible. In the several sets of essays about what kinds of futures they hoped for -- and what they actually expected -- teens at Central expressed concern that they would not find a meaningful place for themselves if they left the mountains. Nevertheless, many young adults were curious about what lay beyond the county line. For the sizable minority who had never crossed that line in all of their sixteen or so years the possibility of venturing beyond the hills was both daunting and exciting.

The paradox of living in the mountains is that you can feel both safe and secure yet feel trapped. "The mountains make me feel like I'm at home because I'm warm and secure," wrote Lisa. "My holler is my family," added Amy, explaining, "everyone that lives up my holler is related to me in some way." However, these same close knit relationships have their down sides, ones that were poignantly experienced by many teenagers who chafe at the constricted environment. Still, students expressed considerable ambivalence about leaving. Most would prefer to stay near home or return after further schooling or military service. But they also realized that their prospects for well-paid employment were not promising wherever they looked. At a young age, students expressed the fear that they were trapped with few options in life. Seeing their many peers who never leave the region, or the young couples who return to the mountains unable to find work in the cities, Devon wrote, "Appalachia is a rat trap. Once your in you never get away. It seems that once your here you never leave and if you do leave you always come back." This sense of their future being stacked against them was further exacerbated for those who felt that they would remain marginal within their home communities based on race, family status, income, or other factors.

The Myth of the Frontier Family

The rugged mountain terrain is the grounds upon which Hickory Countians have constructed an origin myth which establishes them as a distinct and endangered people. A shared story about how the original sets of families came to Hickory County provides a common orientation with which to locate themselves relative to the rest of the United States. To be "mountain" means to be a descendent (either literally or via fictive kinship) of the class of Anglo-Saxon Long Hunters who crossed through the Cumberland Gap into the vast and untamed western frontier named "Ken-ta-kee" in the end of the eighteenth century. Hickory Countians cite their rugged and isolated environment with producing a separate group of people who still value close ties to land, family, place, hunting, and fundamental Christianity. This history serves as a reference point against which to contrast current struggles for sovereignty and perseverance. Because they conquered and overcame the wilderness, Hickory County - and therefore its schools - are, to their way of thinking, their rightful place in the world to do with as they will.[6]

When describing their mountain heritage, Hickory Countians evoke a shared myth of the rugged frontier family who, together, conquered the wilderness. This myth is a condensed way of referring to the traditions of filial loyalty, interdependence within a small network of kin and neighbors, autonomy from external governance, and commitments to maintaining family ties through reunions and weekend trips home, even if a branch of the family moved to a northern city to pursue work. Resistance to outside intrusion and control is a cornerstone of this inward orientation. Today, this origin myth helps residents sustain the belief that they are, as much as is still possible, independent from the outside world, yet interdependent within their families and neighborhoods. Hickory Countians speak of being proud and self-reliant, a characteristic that most relatively well-off residents feel has been devastatingly undercut by three generations of welfare dependence.

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[6] The extremely fertile and bountiful hunting grounds were prized by the former inhabitants. However, this right of belonging based upon the principle of developing the land is certainly not extended to the native peoples of the area. The 1990 Census records only 71, or less than half of one percent of the total population of Hickory County, as "American Indian, Eskimo or Aleut.

Formal schooling was a complement to the gendered work roles that one learned through hands-on instruction at home. Even when access to high school became more nearly universal in Hickory County by the 1940s, young people's lives were largely spent between school, home, and the nearby homes of cousins, neighbors, and friends. Young marriage and parenthood were, and remain, an important feature of teen life. In fact, of the CHS class of 1995, one in six of the students who could have graduated had conceived a child, were parenting, married, or several of these by the time their peers walked across the stage in May. Nearly all of the married girls were among the half of their class who had left school.

This origin myth also carries within it the idea that the long-held traditional ways of mountain life are endangered. With the advent of the railroad, state highways, and, most recently, a motor parkway designed to lure tourists to the region, the opportunities for contact with external influences have continued to multiply. "I don't know if it's cars or what," declared Mr. Harris, continuing:

> the schools used to be the center for all social activities. But nowadays you don't know if your kid is at the mall or at the movies [both of which are on the county periphery] or where they are. It saddens me to see our way of life changing.

This father's concerns are understandable, given how sheltered his own life was just twenty years ago.

Most, but certainly not all, people now readily subscribe to the use of modern appliances, media, cars, clothing styles, and medicine. Music remains, as elsewhere, a source of disagreement between the generations; whereas many older adults may enjoy their gospel or bluegrass sessions with fellow musicians, teens at Central tend to switch on the radio to play country music for them. Some parents actively resist the temptation to bring in sources of information or entertainment, refusing to pay for cable or the satellite dish necessary to receive television programs. Mrs. Allen explained her decision, stating that "life here is enough of a soap opera. My kids don't need to see even more things on TV." Instead, she and her children sat together in the evening doing homework and listening to the radio station's Christian program, Focus on the Family.

Mountains as Cognitive Boundaries

The mountainous setting also provides the basis for establishing cognitive boundaries that delineate who is "inside" and who is "outside." Hickory County is, in effect a social world unto itself, even though to someone outside it may look identical to its neighbors to the north, south, east, and west. Likewise, within the county, the vast system of creeks and rivers carves out valley bottoms and an intricate series of steep hollers that create niches which belong to different families and communities of insiders. Children learn in Head Start that it is as important to know which side of which mountain you are from as which family you come from. At Central High, teens from the Troublesome Creek end of the county are automatically branded as "hicks" or "creeks" while those from the county seat or other regions are not so easily labeled. The distinctions between these places may not be readily apparent to the newcomer, but they are extremely meaningful to those who call "Grey's Brach" or "Higgens' Holler" home. Mrs. Meyer, a teacher who returned home to teach at Central after years of following her husband's military career, told how she could simply smell the air and know that she was home again.

The kinds of separations between social groups within the county and between Hickory County and other places transcend merely physical distinctions. On a cognitive level, the mountains provide clear distinctions between "insiders," and "outsiders," "home folks," and "furriners." They provide boundaries that distinguish between insiders who belong in a teaching position at Central as a natural kind of birthright, and outsiders who are seen as unfairly infringing on a tight local job market. Likewise, these concepts of insider and outsider are extended to provide the means for deciding who is acting in the best interest of reasonable family and friendship obligations and who is being "political." They differentiate between who is a "community builder" and who wants to change what is "good enough." These broad concepts differentiate between those who understand how things are here and respect and defer - at least publicly - to local hierarchies of power and privilege and those who venture to take a stake in change.

Mountains as Symbols of Valued Traits

The ever-present nature of mountain geography reinforces the mountains as key symbols. Hickory Countians freely used these physical elements as the raw materials for making metaphors that express key ideas about themselves and others. Thus to say "he is mountain." expresses an essentialism implying that the person is neighborly, committed to his or her family and close friends, has self-respect yet is a humble public person, and is self-reliant and independent yet has extensive interdependencies on neighbors, friends, and kin. He or she is, in essence, one of the "home folks."These traits are valued all the more because they are seen as being at odds with their views of urban and suburban life in other parts of the United States.

When a person goes away and gives up the dialect, taking on "proper" ways of speaking, she or he is said to have "lost some of the mountain." These choices about how one will present oneself are all the most salient because over 96 percent of Hickory Countians are "white" as listed on the Census. For these youth, the option of "passing" for a mainstream resident is more open than it is for their peers of color. However, and perhaps paradoxically because they have the option of leaving, the choices that white teens at Central make about where they "belong" is all the more difficult. When one has an actual choice to make, it is harder to blame others for one's lot in life.

Mountains as Symbols of Resilience

'The mountains that surround Central High School stand as sentinels to guard against change that would come too quickly or too forcefully. In the past they have been effective buffers, holding back numerous waves of reform that may have transformed schools elsewhere. But increasingly, as Hickory County's ninety-odd one room schools were forced to consolidate, as the high school curriculum was expanded, as technology brought the outside world closer, these mountains have only slowed down the rate at which new ideas and practices filter into these rural schools.

Nevertheless, teachers, students, and staff at Central High continue to look to the granite cliffs around them as symbols of resilience. Although the mountains have been deeply scarred by strip and surface mining and clear cutting of timber, they still stand. Residents spoke of themselves as being like the mountains, holding their ground and persevering in the face of adversity. Whether or not to implement KERA was just the most recent of such challenges that they faced. It would not be the last.

Further, the mountains symbolize patience in a changing world. They encourage skepticism of change for the sake of change and guarded optimism that new legislative moneys will actually trickle down to the neediest of children. Following the maxim in the hymn that warns against putting one's faith in "shifting sands" of the latest (secular) reform fad, residents prefer "the solid rock" of the known an transcendent. The mountains have stood the test of time; Hickory Countians are also prepared to patiently wait and see.

While policies may be written at a state level, reform is a radically local process. Reform is not about plotting abstract options on some chart of dichotomous outcomes. Reform is, at its best, a messy, passionate, political process. These are choices made by real people in real places. They are seldom either-or choices, but decisions about how best to balance the multiple interests and different individuals involved. And, in an important way often overlooked in the push for standardized reform, a strong sense of place infuses this struggle with meaning. Long-term commitments to a particular place inspire these Appalachians' desires to remain distinct and to act on their own behalf to create viable, vital communities that they control. These ways of understanding the interdependence of Hickory County cultures, communities, and place challenge approaches to reform that assume that these are but peripheral to the real meaning of education. In Hickory County they are central.

If sustained, thoughtful reform it is to blossom, it must be find suitable soils in which to grow. Change takes patience and persistent tending. But those who actively participated in the process of reform at Central High felt that they had little choice. They were investing for the future, leaving more for their children that they took for themselves. They were determined that those who came after would find something there in those very mountains that would give them hope to carry on. They were determined that their young people would find both the reasons and the means to stay. Many people in this Appalachian mountain county have deeply-held commitments to both place and progeny. This is what ultimately motivated many people to take the risk of becoming stakeholders in the process of school reform. A life-long resident and father of five summed up the long-term benefits of cultivating change right there in his homeplace, "Reform is like planting a walnut tree on *your* mountain. Your *kid* is going to enjoy it."

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METHODOLOGY

Why ethnography?

Ethnography provides many advantages when completing a study such as this. It is vital to situate the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) within the larger contexts of power and meaning which profoundly shape the local response of resistance, and ultimately, resilience. On-location, extended participant observation coupled with formal means of information gathering provided the diverse repertoire of tools that I needed to match the richness and complexity of my subject matter.

In order to observe and organize patterns in the local response to this particular reform as well as to change in general, it was necessary to be part of daily life at Central and in the surrounding county for a significant period of time. I felt that it was imperative to my credibility as a researcher, both to academic audiences as well as to the people in my field site, to spend an entire academic year at Central High School. People in Hickory County are patient, preferring to get to know newcomers over a period of time in both formal and informal settings. They want to establish joking relationships and opportunities for exchange of gifts, meals, rides, and other resources that contribute real ways in which you come to know and depend on one another. As of this writing, I have spent over 13 months in Hickory County. I hope to return many more times for continued, collaborative fieldwork.

I made the commitment to move to Kentucky for very important reasons. It was important to prove to them that I intended to make as many observations as possible, not simply sweep in and cavalierly declare that I could summarize their culture in one fell swoop. They had seen outsiders do this all too often.

Trust

One of very first and most persistent questions that I had to answer was why I was at their school and what I intended to accomplish. People at Central were primed to assume the worst; they did not trust easily outsiders. My neighbor put their concerns succinctly, "If you're here all the way from Stanford to write a book[1] you're either gonna expose us or exploit us!"

The often uncomfortable sense of being under my scrutiny was compounded by the concurrent state investigation. In fact many believed, at least initially, that I had been sent by the OEA as a kind of advance guard, an undercover scout. One respondent on the End of the Year Fieldwork Survey[2] wrote, only half in jest, that at the beginning he or she thought I "was from the F.B.I. or C.I.A. or a genuine G.I. Joe coming into impoverished Appalachian to rescue us from this dreaded plight!" The author added for clarification, "Just kiddin' I was not surprised I feel our school has been a good setting and we have received attention from this research." Even one person who later trusted me and worked extensively with me admitted, "At the beginning of the year I thought you may have been with the state department or sort of a 'spy' for the school board. No, I'm *not* crazy!" Even if I was not a spy, it was apparent that I "was a person interested in education with a good background to judge our school, so," this respondent added, "we should stay away from her." Another respondent wrote that there was an element of uncertainty about why I was there. He or she wrote, "Probably because her role was not fully explained at the beginning, there was an element of mistrust from some. The difference between research and evaluation was unclear." I felt that I had done a good job of initially explaining how and why I had come to Central High in Hickory County. But this remained a question that I was asked all year.

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[1] Despite my protests, most people at Central referred to my project as "writing a book." I was explict that this was for a university doctoral dissertation and even explained to the many unfamiliar with what that entailed how it was different from a book. I was particularly clear in the many presentations that I made in the sophomore Engligh classes. The students were aghast that I was writing a "200-page paper" when they shuddered at a full page essay. However, despite my protests and explanations to the contrary, both students and adults persisted in using these shorthand ways of referring to my work.

[2] At the end of the year I conducted an anonymous survey of faculty and staff. I requested that they complete such open-ended phrases as "At the beginning of the y ear I thought she. . ." or "The main concern that I have about her and her research is. . ." I also asked for conclusions about the positive and negative impacts, if any, that I had and the personal attributes or characteristics (e.g. age, sex. personality, work ethic) that had made a differene to them in how they perceived me and my intensions. A full copy of the survey is included in the Appendix. Of the 76 faculty and staff who could have attended, only 44 were present at the mid-May faculty meeting where I handed this survey out. I received 35 back immediately, including 2 blank and 3 which were designated (by their writers) as jokes. I then put a survey in the mailbox of all those who were not at the meeting or handed them personally to staff members who did not have a box. I approached many who had not been present and told them of my desire for a frank evaluation and accompanied this request with a written notice by the boxes that anyone could return a survey to the secure folder I used for this purpose . By the end of the week I had received a total of 44 surveys back.

The result of being aware of these concerns and doing my best to respond to them was, as one respondent wrote, that most people felt I had "done an extremely good job at making the teachers/administrators and students comfortable about expressing their opinions." Another added, "She has worked well with everyone. In this county, people tend to not be very receptive of 'outsiders.' However, I do feel people were receptive to her and her work." For the most part, I also believe that this was true. Some people never warmed up to the idea of having me there. I was careful to recognize and acknowledge their concerns. One such opportunity arose when one of these teachers was among the group gathered in the faculty lounge on the day that I was going to make a slide of this important space. As usual, I announced my intention to take a picture, and asked if anyone had any objections. He somewhat hesitated to say something, but I responded to the muffled remark by making explicit how I was standing to the side so that he would be obscured behind the pop machine.

My entry to the school had been facilitated by a strong working relationship with the Director of the Youth Service Center. I had met him the previous summer when I worked as a consultant on a drop out prevention program that primarily served eastern Kentucky teens. I had had the opportunity to travel to a dozen high schools in several districts and to talk with school personnel about issues of school reform, drop outs, community support for school, their impressions of KERA, etc. I also went to a retreat designed as a reward for teens who had participated in the program but who were still at risk of leaving school prematurely. The YSC at Central High had participated in these programs. In my research into regional Youth Service Centers, I found out that this one enjoyed a good reputation, not the least of which was due to its outgoing, forward-thinking, and easily approachable staff. From my initial visits, I also saw that it was a place where teens felt comfortable coming when they needed an open ear and mind, a shot in the arm, or just a place in the very large consolidated school where they could be themselves. Upon returning to CHS to help with the 1993 Freshman Orientation, I immediately felt that I could establish an enjoyable and interesting relationship with this particular director. My official role, as it developed over the course of the next year while I was finishing course work at Stanford, was to come to Central as an adjunct YSC staff member. My duties would remain unspecified, but I would be free to help with whatever YSC activities I wished to and/or was needed for.

Even after this explanation, people in the community and at Central wanted to know why I had specifically chosen Hickory County as the focus of my investigation. They questioned how I came to choose this rural and somewhat isolated region. The most common assumption was that they were the very worst in the state and I had come to write an exposé about Appalachia. Indeed, I assured them, I picked Hickory County specifically because it was not the worst, but rather shared many characteristics in common with many of its eastern Kentucky neighbors. This fact made it easier to disguise the exact location of the county. It also makes conclusions more generalizeable to other counties that face a similar array of issues. The dozen or so counties that I initially contemplated for my study had all participated in the initial court case that culminated in the KERA legislation. They had similar drop out rates, college-going rates, KIRIS test scores, rates of teen pregnancy, financing structures, and, at least on paper, had site-based councils and participated in the regional educators' forum. I had purposely picked a school district that appeared to be implementing KERA. I wanted to look at a discourse on reform that was already well underway. Many listeners were actually a bit disappointed to hear that they could not claim the notoriety of being the worst (and therefore being selected on that basis), but they expressed satisfaction that at least I had done my homework.

Despite the explanation that I had selected Central because I wanted to observe a faculty who were in the thick of reform, there was still mistrust that I had come in to "fix them" myself. They were certain that I was yet another "outsider trying to change us." "Had [she] come down to tell us how to live [or] to study us as a "quaint" species? Oh, well, maybe she'll see our value, not our image," mused another respondent. They were worried that I would come as an expert on their problems and that, following their construction of what it meant to be an expert, that I really was not interested in listening to mere practitioners. Nothing could have been further from the truth. Only through extensive interactions did they come to realize that I had come more to learn than to intervene, more to ask questions than to give answers. In fact, I eschewed being a source of answers, although some would have liked me to have provided them easy methods to solve their problems.

A further element that was important in establishing a baseline of trust was the length of time that I spent in the county. The months that I spent in Hickory enabled me to experience first-hand many of the same activities hardships that they deal with one a regular basis. I attended church, went to a fundamentalist Christian revival and musical events, went to the annual county festival and parade. But it was sharing the grinding challenges of everyday life on a painfully low income and isolated from extensive shopping or health care facilities that made the most difference in their perception that I really understood what it meant to live in their county.

When I severely sprained my ankle in the third week I was there and had to drive to the next county to reach a facility that could cast it, I could empathize with those who did not have a car, a driver, insurance, or cash. When I was trapped in my house during flood season, I too had to cope with the very real limitations in a county with a significant portion of gravel and dirt roads and a raging river. When I went to the public health department and sat for a hour on the long railroad station benches, to see a retired doctor who came to the mountains once a week from a city over two hours away to do gynecological care, I appreciated what his sacrifices and generosity meant for my health. When out of financial necessity I joined a food exchange program where you could get a carton of food for $13 and some hours of public service, I understood what it meant to wait until delivery day until you could have fresh food. I also learned about having friends and learning to trust strangers when the program sponsor loaned me the $13 to get me started because I did not have it. I learned about patience and the importance of friends when one Central's staff took me and my problem-ridden car to his favorite mechanic. A week and $45 later I had a completely new electronic system that this man had scrounged up from one "best" of the county junkyards.

Ways of Working at Central High School and in Hickory County

Sources of Data

Briefly summarized, I used many forms of informal and formal data gathering techniques. In bullet points:

- I analyzed the results of the Effective Schools Surveys that had been done at Central the year prior. They had only been completed because the surveys had been required by some external monitoring agent. However, no one in Hickory County took ownership of the data, the external monitor had disappeared, and the data had been abandoned. Central's administration, staff and I were able to make use of the data once it was in interpretable and organized form.

- I wrote, conducted and analyzed the following surveys:
  Effective Schools Survey Results
  Initial Parent Survey
  Faculty Survey I

Faculty Survey II
Quiz on Hickory County
Parent Attitude Survey
GED Survey
First Year Student Survey
Superintendent Screening Committee Survey
End of Year Fieldwork Survey

- I also attempted to do three more versions of the Faculty Survey II with other community groups. None of these panned out but they were great learning opportunities nonetheless.

- I paid for cable in order to receive any television stations at all. I watched the regional news whenever possible. I also listened to the Hickory County radio station as they had many messages and commentaries about the county schools.

- On a regular basis I gathered:

  Photocopied flyers hung up around the District Central Office, Central, in beauty salons, town restaurants, floral shops, etc.
  Official memos and attendance sheets
  Student graffiti
  Historical Society newsletters

- I subscribed to the regional newspaper for three years, beginning with the year prior to going to the site. This provided a ready familiarity with key players, the annual cycle of events and hot topics. I did a detailed content analysis of nearly every issue. With an editor's generous help I also made copies of relevant past issues.

- I hung out in local stores, restaurants, offices, the court house, banks, drug stores and the grocery store over which I lived.

- I worked with the sophomore English classes, social studies, and business/ keyboarding classes to generate student essays on items of common interest and utility. I did not just take the data and run, I also debriefed students on my analysis and synthesis of their writings, often engaging them in further conversations how I saw their writing fitting together.

- I interviewed 14 of the faculty members formally and over a dozen others informally throughout the year. I have at least one survey from over 95 percent of them.

- I interviewed 34 students formally, either individually or in triads, in addition to year-long observations of them in groups and after- and during-school activities

- I interviewed 12 members of the staff, 9 community leaders, 5 business owners, 2 young professionals, 11 "involved parents," 5 central office staff members, and 7 non-involved parents who were called to Central to pick up their sick or unruly kids. Some of these were followed up in their homes several times through the course of the year.

- After repeated requests, I finally was able to interview the Interim Superintendent, the Superintendent, and all Board members.

- I made decisions about which tapes to fully transcribe based on which sections became most important. I also had written notes from all interviews as well as fieldnotes.

- I traveled throughout the county on my own, with neighbors, with informants, and, most frequently, with the Truant Officer.

- I supplemented information and flyers that I gathered at the regional Historical Society and KY State Department with data off of CD-ROMS, including the new Census. Most of the latter I gathered on trips back to Wisconsin.

- I also used regional, local, and Wisconsin libraries extensively to gather background, historical, and regional information. Berea College resources and the Appalachian Center at the University of Kentucky were particularly helpful.

Flexibility

The most typical thing about a day in the field was that there was little that was typical. Certainly, I hung around with a several, loosely-bounded sets of students, I usually ate lunch with the same group of teachers in the lunchroom, I spent time in the nursery with the teen parents and their babies, I lingered in the teachers' lounge, I ran errands for the staff and brought students to the office, I answered the phone in the main office, I visited classrooms, I attended meetings after school and stayed late into the evening for still more meetings. I went to sporting events, especially the boys' basketball games which were accorded the highest status of any sport. I also went to away games held in other counties to compare facilities, crowds, behaviors, etc. However, none of these practices were static; I had to continually renegotiate my place in these settings as well as decide anew what my roles would be each day. My activities also gradually shifted as the year progressed and as some groups (e.g. the superintendent screening committee) became more active and the activity levels of others waned.

I usually wandered through the YSC at least a couple of times a day just to see what was happening. I went on field trips with them occasionally. During the winter and spring I worked at the YSC-sponsored "Bear Den" stand, a YSC initiative established to recognize students for their grades and attendance. On Fridays, students could come in and see how many "Bear Bucks" they had earned for attendance and for grades. They could then put them toward shorts and sweatshirts with the school logo on it, Valentine's Day theme gifts, cool writing instruments, basketballs, etc. I was also asked to be an emergency substitute teacher several times, but I never made it a regular activity.

As a result of having virtually no formal duties, I remained quite flexible. I could hike off to the district bus garage and if a conversation there lasted an hour or more, that was just fine. This flexibility was key to my ability to take advantage of situations and conversations that suddenly sprang up. Numerous terrific conversations came about just because I happened to chat with a janitor by the stairs, a worker in the cafeteria during a coffee break, a teacher who was bored staffing detention, a kid who was laying out, a parent who I met on the street.

I made a point of making sure that I was an integral part of daily life at Central rather than a stumbling block who was constantly in the way. A respondent commented, "she was willing to do a lot of the 'busy work' type of stuff that otherwise might not have gotten done." I worked in ways that would be helpful; I sold parking permits, I helped clean up after the Snow-Ball (dance), I worked at the concession stand. I wanted to contribute rather than just take. Two respondents summed up the common assessment: " she immediately became involved in our school life and was an integral part of our group" and "she has been very visible at the school." A respondent who believed at the beginning of the year that I "was going to do a brief not too in-depth study of what was happening here" decided by the end that I had:

> been thorough - covering all aspects of CHS from one end of the county to the other and has been a significant asset to our school. She has acquired a fundamental understanding on how public schools are organized and then try to change.

A side benefit to my working at tedious tasks was that they saw me as someone they could count on in time of need and someone who did not shy away from hard, mundane, even dirty work. I did not want to give the false impression that I was there to take and to keep aloof from the hard and seldom fully appreciated work that it takes to make the social life and logistics of a school flow smoothly. A respondent wrote, "she is very dependable, when she has her mind on something she does it." Another added this seemingly incongruous list, "laid back, non-critical, easy going personality, work aholic."

"You're at *every*thing!" announced an equally involved parent. At one evening meeting, I chose a seat near a particular woman whom I knew well. This parent served the school on several committees and through booster groups and frequently went to site-base council meetings. Our paths had crossed on nearly every afternoon or night for the last week. She exclaimed in jest to the assembling crowd that she was certain that I was actually following *her*. Picking up on the joke, I told her that the meetings were really a rouse and that I was with the F.B.I. and that I was hot on her tail! A small group of people within earshot joined in the joke. They then parodied her concern and turned it into a commentary that even the FBI had heard how much trouble she was causing in town. They laughed that she ought to get out of town before she caused any more trouble. This disruption of the meeting settled down with quite a few snickers. After the meeting, the interaction cascaded into a conversation about the amount of work/ "trouble making" that it took really get something done. I used to opportunity to praise my confederate for her devotion to trying to make a difference.

Creating Opportunities for Interactions

There were several other beneficial aspects to my presence at a variety of events and ongoing meetings. First, I often put myself in situations where I could overhear the behind the scenes banter. I became such a regular fixture in such venues as the cooks' lunch break, teachers' planning period relaxation in the lounge, the main office, the nursery, the refreshment stand at ball games, etc. that I could participate in the exchanges, complaints, discussions, and work as an informed participant. I was genuinely surprised at the level of openness that developed during the course of the year.

Second, not having an office to myself led me to write field notes and conduct some interviews in semi-public spaces. One of my regular places to have coffee was in the lunchroom. This led to several serendipitous meetings, including one with a teacher who had been reticent in large group settings. But one on one, he felt comfortable enough to finally ask about my research questions and how things were going. On my follow-through visit a year later, he recalled how at ease he had felt when he finally met me alone. This same teacher then proceeded to recreate a similarly private setting where he briefed me on his perspective of what had happened in the interim since I was there.

Third, I carefully judged the appropriate degree of privacy that would create the best atmosphere for both me and my respondent. I often talked to former administrators and principals, school board members, involved parents and community leaders in large crowds. Most of them lived in the county and attended the boys' basketball games. They sat together, talked together, and milled around the gym foyer at the same time. I used these opportunities to let them see me talking freely with one of their peers, even using their desire to catch up with one another as an excuse for one to introduce me to the other.

At Central, I also used the same technique to let more reluctant participants know that I was able to talk to their friends. I was not just at Central to talk to a select few; I was interested in meeting as many people as possible and I wanted to let them see me talking to people who they knew to be at odds with one another. I also explicitly built bridges by alternating other activities. Some parents or teachers, especially men, were especially sensitive to what others might say if they saw the two of us alone in their car. I therefore divided up who I asked for a ride on one of the many occasions when my own car was being worked on. I also alternated who I was seen walking the school halls with, who I sat and ate lunch with, who I shared cookies in the office, whose personal refrigerator I kept my lunches in and more. In a similar way, people watched to see if others accepted gifts from me such as the highly esteemed home baked cookies sent by my partner. They were checking with their peers to see if it was all right to enter into a reciprocal relationship of exchange with me. These were all small but significant hints as to where I belonged and who they thought I was allied with.

In contrast to these public ways of establishing relationships, I often created situations that were sufficiently private that few if any others knew that I was interviewing or just casually talking with a particular person. This was especially important in creating a safe environment for those who did not want their peers to know that they had been talking with me. For example, this meant seeking out a custodian when he was alone in a back hallway. It also meant arranging to use a side room off the library that had a door in which to conduct interviews with students.

However, the degree to which I could assert my exclusive right to a space was limited in that there were no completely private spaces. The library room provides a key example of how my interviews had to proceed despite interference and the surveillance of others. A librarian who resented the fact that I was at Central at all, although she grudgingly had assented to my request to use the room, repeatedly came in a used the copier in the room. She found numerous excuses to copy one or two pages, and then linger over the copier, during most of the first dozen interviews. Although the students were concerned that she had just barged in on a frank discussion of drug use, the discipline policy, teachers they admired and worked hard for, staff members who tormented them, and other sensitive topics, I proceeded as if these interruptions were normal. For, in fact, they were. After a while, her copying forays all but ceased and I wrapped up the last sets of interviews unimpeded.

Finally, another initially unintended side effect of my presence at various events and ongoing meetings was that my presence gave some weight to the importance of the activity. Because I was a regular participant rather than a special guest, my presence did not usurp the participants' roles as very important persons. Rather, my presence conveyed that the events we both attended were indeed important.

I was so involved at Central for another good reason: there were few other things to do for legal entertainment in Hickory County. I did have numerous offers to join students in private parties where they smoked tobacco, marijuana and worse, played pool or cards, paired off for intimate liaisons and drank beer supplied by their favorite bootlegger. However, I felt that the information that I could gain in those settings might be suspect and that I would certainly be put in awkward situations when I refused to drink or smoke. The last movie theater had gone out of business years ago; one had to drive to the edge of the next county to see a movie. Most activities were family or church-based and there was little outreach to include newcomers or strangers in any activities other than missionary revivals. I did invest in a television set and watched the daily regional news as often as possible (Central High and the state investigation were frequently profiled), often with a notebook by my side. In the evenings after doing reflections, filing field notes, and dissecting the local paper with my pen I would often watch cable television. (I had no choice but to subscribe to cable because television reception is nearly nil without it.) But I found that I had little free time. An aspect of being so involved that is seldom acknowledged in such reflections as these is that by staying so busy, I had less time to sit alone and miss my new husband and the old friends who I never saw and sorely missed.

An In-between Person

The fact that I was even invited to join students in their homes or in their cars for rides home reveals an important factor in my research. At the time of my research, I was 27 years old. My hair style was similar to that worn by many students. I dressed much like the teens in the several groups that I most frequently spent time with, although did dress more formally when attending and/or speaking in faculty meetings, public forums, or committee meetings. Through dress, demeanor, and formality of speech I created affinities with those most likely to question my presence. But I also made a point of showing up in clothes and with props (e.g. tape recorders, surveys, camera) that were not usual in my setting. These instances provided opportunities for me to reaffirm my research roles and to get them used to seeing me with these props.

Appearing in a somewhat ambiguous way, that is, older but not too old, casual but not too casual, created situations for me to learn first hand some lessons about what it was to be a new and unknown female student. In the first weeks two young football players repeatedly flirted with me when our eyes would meet in the halls. Their body language and gestures to their comrades indicated that they felt that I should be very impressed with them. I didn't respond to encourage their actions; perhaps my lack of interest was enough to look elsewhere. They may also have heard through the grapevine that I was not a student. I also was racked. This painful custom means slapping a new, usually male, student on the back of the head as he walks through the hall that belongs to the senior/junior/upper SES clique. I was so surprised that it had happened that I was already around the corner before I realized that the commotion of hushed laughter that had just erupted in the hall behind me was likely a response to someone striking me.

One of the benefits of hanging around with different groups of students in the halls and wandering around the grounds is that I met a diverse sample of teens. we often talked about their interests and skills beyond what they had opportunity to show in the classroom. Through such informal interactions, I found out which students had special abilities that I could encourage. For instance, I loaned my camera to a young photographer with the assignment to shoot informal shots of "cruisin'" with his male buddies and sitting at home with his family. He said that he actually did not like to take pictures for school publications, but mine was a different, novel kind of request. This was not homework. He had been part of several of my special projects before, and so he knew about informed consent and how to explain the future use of these slides to his subjects. His assistance granted him recognition for his talents as well as $30. Further, these were events that I was not regularly part of and therefore I would not have been as able to get candid shots as he could in one session.

Talking to Everyone

"You'll talk to *any*body!" was the assessment of several teachers who had gathered to discuss a curriculum proposal. They meant this somewhat sarcastically, noting that I did not observe the social boundaries between he different cliques among the faculty and staff. But for me, making sure that I was available, even proactive in seeking out teachers from all parts of the school was key to my research. It was particularly important to talk to people who did not speak to one another unless forced to be polite. I found out some interesting similarities that they did not know that they shared as well as crystallized for my self some points of difference that kept them traditionally divided.

One of my main goals in establishing as broad a base as possible was to create an account that is fair. Teachers who had asked about my work and kept an eye on my questions and investigations were concerned that I "see things from the students and faculty standpoint," not just from numbers, accounts, and minutes of meetings. When asked what kind of a story I was after in my "book," I explained to a concerned teacher that my goal was to be *fair*. He seemed pleased with this answer, for it indicated that even if I was going to include viewpoints that differed from his own, he also had the right to state his side and to believe that he also would be heard. Indeed, after that exchange he frequently came to me to make sure I knew "what was really going on."

I felt that it was important to establish clear rules about my interactions from the beginning. First, I made it clear that I would listen, but that I would not reveal sources or information in a way that could jeopardize the speaker or knowingly contribute to gossip about that person. Numerous times I had the opportunity to respond to the question, "Who told you that?!" with an explicit statement of what confidentiality meant to me. Once that conversation partner felt that I would not reveal a previous informant's name he or she usually felt safer in talking too. This produced a base on confidence that grew firmer as the year progressed. Another of my common responses was to follow the code of gossip around town and prefaced my remarks with the obligatory phrase, "I heard that . . ." and not give any agent at all. I used such statements to elicit opinions about topics that were on the tip of most residents' tongues and about which they only needed minimal prodding to offer their own take on events. I too made use of the common phrases "Well, I just heard it" or "People are saying it" when I was questioned as to where I heard something that was kept a hushed secret or that remained a controversial topic. By prefacing my questions with the assertion that other people were indeed talking to me about a topic that they all cared about but no one dared to mention in public, e.g. gross incompetence among the faculty is a common example, I was letting them know that I already was in the know, and that by commenting they would not be the one to let a family secret out of the bag.

However, I did not push people to talk. Mine was not an inquisition. I was glad to read the comment: "She made sure to feel everyone relaxed with questions she was asking. She was not intimidating." I tried to be upbeat, a person to whom they could talk when it seemed that the most prudent way to handle so much change was to become (self-)silenced. Many respondents agreed with the person who wrote that they experienced me as, "very friendly and makes you feel that you can confide in her."

Throughout the year, teachers variously referred to me as "a means for person to vent their feelings and sometimes frustration." One teacher summed, "she became a sounding board for ideas and frustration due to the growing pains of correction our own problems," Some found that I was a good person to try new ideas or venture suggestion on. Teachers found me in t he lounge, in the halls, and called me at night to ask my opinion and to, subtly, ask for encouragement to speak out at faculty meetings or take a stand that they believed was right regarding, for instance, block scheduling. They asked me to comment on, or at least help them ask questions of one another about policy initiatives. One committee member, reflected that just knowing that they could bounce ideas off me was helpful, "She has caused teachers to re-think policy and procedure and complain both constructively and destructively about them! Ha!" Being there over the long haul was important to them, for as this respondent wrote, "she was always there for someone to talk to."

Although it was not my intention, the surveys revealed that some teachers had found me to be a valuable part of their chaotic, uncertain environment. "She has been a role model and has always uplifted me with a smile." Other added, "I am sure just her energy has been a positive input." I worked with teachers in their classrooms, sometimes helping with an activity that was already on the books, sometimes devising a supplementary activity. Several times, I led the class in a discussion about the metaphors, essays, surveys, or geography lessons that they had been working on. In some cases, this provided just the break that the regular instructor needed. Many times the exercise and practical applications that I devised matched the teachers' learning objectives well; indeed they epitomized the kinds of real-life, problem-based learning that KERA tries to encourage. Mrs. McCormick, suddenly recognizing one afternoon that the students could use one of the exercises for me for their English portfolios, she declared, "Maureen, you've become a KERA goal!"

Additional Places and Resources for Data Gathering

In addition to the many hours that I spent at Central nearly every weekday and evening, I learned a great deal in other settings around Hickory County. Many of my insights and interactions were the result of living on site and conducting my regular shopping, laundry, and health care activities. These activities were facilitated by my residence; I lived in the county seat in an apartment over a grocery store and laundry-mat for ten and a half months. I also went to "neighbor awhile," that is to create gossip, share food, and baby-sit with friends, acquaintances, and people who lived nearby. Very frequently the goal of these outings was not some bleakly instrumental objective of generating data, but rather for companionship, friendship, humor, and sharing of meals. I certainly enjoyed the company of many people sole for the wonderful, warm, humorous, and generous individuals they are. The fact that sometimes the camaraderie shared and critiques exchanged would yield some hint of clarity or a good joke was simply "icing on the cake." Being alone in a strange county far from my dear women friends and husband of two months, I had hungry, gnawing cravings for "cake."

When locating myself for others, I learned how important it is to be able to put oneself within a shared frame of reference that shows how you are connected to others. The address that I gave when describing where I lived is a case in point. People were less interested where in town I lived as where I lived in relation to people and places they knew. Therefore, I lived "on Magnolia across from the Tucker Realty in [the former principal's son] Jimmy O'Conner's new apartments - you remember the fire that took off the roof last year, right? - over the old Danny's Market." Never mind that Danny's now went by the new proprietor's name or that the actual mailing address was not Magnolia Street. The important thing was to show that I understood the importance of these landmarks and that I cold recognize and locate myself in relation to people, i.e. Mr. Tucker, Mr. O'Conner, "Danny's" new proprietor, whom they also knew.

My Status

I usually addressed teachers formally, as "Mr. Allen" or "Mrs. Wilkins," just as they referred to one another when in the presence of parents, other faculty or students. Likewise, I followed the custom with those teachers and staff who were always referred to by their first names by students and other staff. Most of these people were either secretarial staff or Youth Service Center staff. I used formal names in appropriate settings with other faculty, switching when the person (new interviewee) or place (lunchroom) was right. I was on a first name basis with several teachers, many of whom I worked with on a regular basis in soliciting student writing or discussions. About half of these were women approximately my age. At other times I took my cues from those around me. For instance, I made the transition from formal address to first names when the men on the superintendent screening committee made the same significant shift.

Despite my pseudo-staff role, I was nearly always "Maureen." This seemed to be a matter of both status and a marker of intimacy. An administrator remarked, when asked about their use of my first name, "You look young. Even though you're working on a Ph.D. You're still a student." Stated Mrs. Fulton, whose class I often visited, "I guess it never crossed my mind to say it different, I feel like I know you, we're friends." A few students called me Mrs. Porter (pronounced "Mizz" Porter), although I usually used the occasion to explain the "Ms." spelling and its importance to me both before and after marriage. However, Mrs. Raleigh, with whom I frequently worked, usually introduced me as "Ms. Porter," but then called me "Maureen" in front of the students. The latter was what they then used when calling me over to their desks to join in group problem solving.

Tinker, Insider, Outsider, Spy

"The State Spy"

As mentioned previously, the running concern when I arrived was that I was working for the state department as an undercover investigator, a forerunner for the full scale inquisition that many felt was impending. Central staff and district educators worried that I had come down to "tinker" with their system, to fix them in preparation for becoming more like the state wished them to be. At first such semi-discreet references to me as "that state woman" or "the state spy" were disturbing because I thought that they indicated that educators did not understand my intentions or trust my ethics. When these nicknames persisted month after month, I became clearly disturbed. But I countered such remarks with polite, even joking responses, and repeated explanations about my work. After a while I began to realize that together, the teachers and I, were creating an elaborate way of referring to me and my inquisitive, non-native style of working that let both of us acknowledge the tensions, yet take them in stride. The key expression of the insider joke we shared was their use of this initially derogatory label, "spy."

The events of one afternoon in the teachers' lounge illustrate a typical scene in this emerging drama. Late in the lunch time hour, I arrived up in the teacher's lounge, hoping to become part of discussions on the week's latest conflict. I had, as usual, my notepad in hand. When I entered, the lounge had over a dozen teachers arranged around the sides in the grimy, overstuffed couches as well as three or four who had wandered in to pick up their mail. unwritten pact well. An excited conversation harshly critiquing the new attendance policies and criticizing the principals' memo was underway. There was a momentary pause as several people looked up and saw me reaching to open my notebook. One person said somewhat sarcastically, "Well, she's finally here - you can't miss this!" However, rather than refusing to help me in my work they then continued their very candid discussions in front of me, and even asked if I was taking notes, "Did you get that down?" Then Mr. Hayes, one of the lounge ringleaders, let loose with the ritual insult, "There's the spy!" My spontaneous, and very proper response was, "Yeah, and I am going to report,[feigning writing away at my tablet] Mr. Hayes wore the ugliest tie again today! He should be suspended without pay for making his colleagues suffer so!" After all the smirks subsided, all those gathered in the teachers' lounge continued with lunch, gossip, and their story telling on one another. Like the heroes of the photocopied joke-sheets, insiders whom others "loved enough to poke fun at," I had shown that I could also laugh at myself and thus was eligible to be included within their circle." However, having lingering doubts that some people might actually believe that I was working in collaboration with the state, I asked Mr. Hayes, one who used several nuanced versions of the ritual insult freely and frequently, about this insult directly. He explained the meaning of the game that we shared, "People like things to be relaxed. People say, 'She's from the state!' to break the ice. If people were serious no one would talk to you." He concurred later, "If'n it was serious, I'd a not told you anything."

Advantages to Being an Outsider

Certainly, I was an outsider in many critical ways the entire year that I lived in Hickory County. Although it gave reason for a bit of consternation on both their and my part, I came to see how being an outsider had many advantages. In talking with parents and staff at Central and in the area, one of the most frequent comments was that stakeholders were glad that I was doing this study because they felt that I was in a better position to write candidly than they were. I would still face resistance and suspicion, for as one parent noted, "even though you are an educated person you would be insulted for asking a question. You are not supposed to be asking questions, no one is."

But, they believed, as this respondent wrote, "I personally feel she can bring her expertise and area of study into our situation by being objective, local and forthright." They felt as someone from the outside, I did not bring to my work the allegiances, biases, personal grudges, and family animosities that they assumed would color the work of any local researcher. Even those who were not certain why I was there, since I did not seem to have a clear agenda/vendetta, stated at various points that they felt I "was non-prejudice observer." Those who I worked with believed that my research "approaches our area with a positive attitude, but also addresses our problems" and as a person I was "a very nice person, friendly, with a good sense of humor, capable of giving an objective view of our situation and advise possible solutions." They felt that "because she was not from the area she could be more fair in her evaluations." Fairness was a key attribute that faculty on all sides of the issues were very concerned about. On the End of the Year Fieldwork Survey, given as the state investigation was about to release its findings, a respondent summed up a frequent evaluation, "She has been one of the most objective observers our school has had. She has contributed greatly to our year." Another end of the year evaluator felt that perhaps there had been mutual learning, "She saw us from an outsiders viewpoint who gave us needed input, was beneficial to us, and who may have changed her mind about our school and its functions."

Another beneficial aspect to my outsiderness was that I could play on this unique status when it could help push the research or current project forward. Teachers, a bit enviously, said that I could talk about my findings, even distribute copies of the survey results, whereas "an insider probably wouldn't dare." They felt that even if things went badly, "you can leave." Another way in which I could play up my special status was to be the voice piece for those who did not feel powerful enough to say it themselves. Mr. Evans, a teacher with whom I often worked, said:

> People feel that you might be an indirect link to getting something done. For example, the student letters to Newmann. I wouldn't have dared to have went to him and said this is what students think - because I signed the petition and what happened at the beginning of the year [most faculty signed a petition to eliminate site-based decision-making because they had selected a candidate who was not the teachers' first choice as well as an outsider]. But *you* could do it.

I was in a position to not only talk to the student authors, but to bring up, anonymously of course, the most common concerns mentioned in the letters in my next interaction with the principal.

Other elements of explicitly taking on the role of an outsider also worked to my advantage. I could ask "stupid " questions about very basic things (Do all churches have Wednesday night services? How many people are involved?). I could be straightforward in asking for information as I was expected to be ignorant of valued cultural elements. However, this did not apply to asking too bluntly about such small town issues as civil misdemeanors, extramarital affairs, student sexual and verbal abuse, or financial mismanagement that they were not proud of, but were elements of shared background knowledge nonetheless. Questions such as, "Why was he finally moved to another position?" had to be answered through different routes. An entirely different approach, one that emphasized insider loyalties and previously gained knowledge of the answer would have to be used. Someone (and by the end of the year I could identify several likely candidates) would be willing to verify that data if they didn't feel that they had been the one to reveal the "Central family" secret.

As someone with numerous external data resources, I could also explicitly use my connections to get information that we needed to write a grant or proposal. I did not flaunt my university affiliation during my year, except in situations where it proved useful in gaining access or information that otherwise was not going to be easily released. Some groups, particularly those at the regional or state level, were not at all impressed when I called up as "Maureen Porter from Hickory County " and wanted information about KERA or the district's drop out rates. However, when I called back as Maureen Porter from Stanford University and made the same request for statistics, policy data, even background research to be done on my behalf, or an appointment with a high-level official, I was never refused. In fact, people even went out of their way to search for the appropriate data or person I needed.

Remaining an Outsider

Despite the many ways that my outsider status could be used to my advantage, there were other times that my response to the year in Kentucky was more ambivalent. There were some times where others saw ways in which I was different first and foremost. A particularly good examples is how I was frequently introduced. When in the field, I did not always appreciate being introduced in a way that reinforced that I was different. Students and staff would refer to me as the "California lady" or say "she's from Stanford U-ni-vers-i-ty" as though that were something special. I knew enough about their prejudices against both outsiders (especially "Yankees") and educated, so-called experts to downplay aspects that might contribute to their preconceptions of who I was. Sometimes this was a difficult thing to achieve. In some cases, the person I was with clearly gained status by being seen with me, or being my guide or even calling me "friend." (Even when this friendship was genuine, as it often became, the fact that I might be something of a collector's item or oddity was an unavoidable aspect of the relationship.) He or she was determined that all those around us in the corner store or relative's home know that I was from far away and that I had asked to learn from my knowledgeable and well-connected host. About all I could do was to stand there like a prize-winning heifer that brought fame to her owner. Whether I tried to downplay my outsiderness or whether I had little choice but to accept and run with it, the issue of ultimately being an outsider was always in the background. For a few people at Central it remained squarely in the foreground.

There were several salient differences that ultimately divided me from the people with whom I lived. Some of these were probably more important to me than to them. I feel that these were more significant to me than to them; they may not even have known about these characteristics. However, they were important because through their contrast with the local mores and norms, they helped bring into even sharper focus some cultural dimensions that were important and valued in that context. Some differences were especially notable to them but had never been causes for my own consternation, at least not before.

First, I am, in their terms, essentially homeless. I have moved at least once, even up to three times, a year in 10 of the last 12 years. I lived abroad for two of those years, and traveled in four different continents. At the time of my fieldwork, I had active checking accounts in five places in four states, and my tax returns, well, we won't go into that. I had indeed grown up in a rural area for my first 16 years, but then my family moved to another state, and within two years I had left home to pursue travel, higher education, and employment. For me, the innocuous and inevitable question of "Where's home for you?" that is part of the standard exchange when you meet someone new, was a question that only showed how "rootless" I was. My "hometown" was in one state, my parents lived in another, and I went to school on the West Coast. What is more, my new husband of a few months had remained at his job in yet another state while I was in the field. That I was a young woman with no "home" made me somewhat suspect, a loose drifter with too few obligations and, possibly not sense of commitment to either people or place. In response to my pitiful, disconnected state, one of the staff members at the school, borrowing a phrase so frequently tossed about in those months after the Republican electoral landslide, stated that by seeing their model of living near their families "maybe we'll teach you some family values."

Second, the melee of ideas and options that I had so enjoyed at Stanford was radically different from milieu in this fieldsite. I was used to at being institutions where I was encouraged to jump into conversations, assert my opinion, read and write critically, argue dispassionately, and leave the classroom just as good friends as before. As a privileged Stanford student, I saw the world as being lined with open doors. I was given my own set of keys, encouraged to take chances, prodded to assertively network to create opportunities for myself, in short, seek out the greatest challenge I could. I was, I was told repeatedly, in charge of my future and I was expected to give my school a sound return on their considerable investment in me.

Third, to me the world beyond the Hickory hollows was very real and tangible. Furthermore, it is fundamentally important. During the first week that I was in Hickory County I asked several shopkeepers where I could buy a copy of the New York Times. No one knew. Several proprietors of office supply and book stores echoed the words of the salesperson who, sincerely trying to be helpful, asked, "The New York Times? Honey, are you from New York? Is that your-all's local paper?" By the end of the week

I did find out that a college in the region subscribed to the Sunday edition of the Times (I was told that it could cost too much to get the whole thing, and besides, their students would not read it anyway). Electronic mail was another well-established means of communication. I had a modem installed in my lap-top computer and so, through links to Stanford, I had a personal on-ramp to at least some sections of the information superhighway. I spent time showing my modem to some students and the children of friends; I wanted them to share in the excitement of what the world already contained, even if they were not likely to see it for years to come.

All of these things made my field stay a challenge. Making the transition from debater, participant, and critical writer to being a silent observer who offered neither advice nor opinion was the most difficult. I confided this challenge to a few of the people with whom I worked most closely. Members of the superintendent screening committee, in our fifth month of working together, kidded me about how hard it must be to just listen. I had done very well as silent secretary to their committee, only asking for clarification and explanations of terms. When they decided that I should sit in on the actual interviews and take detailed notes for their reference, they noted that I could not ask any questions, "not even," Mr. Newmann chided, "questions of clarification!"

There were certainly some disadvantages to being from the outside. In the beginning, they compounded the already sensitive issues of mistrust. A respondent wrote, "some people are intimidated by her. We do not need any more ill feelings here." A small, but nonetheless significant subset of older teachers would have agreed with the respondent who reiterated the charge that I was working in collaboration with the state forces that they heard a lot about but seldom, if ever, saw in person. One wrote, "some teachers feel she was a spy for the state- some are angered by her presence - thinking she was an outsider that nosed around our business." This group particularly resented the fact that they felt powerless to prevent me from being there. In their avoidance of me and failure to respond to requests for information indicated that they wanted to be left alone. Other teachers and staff were also concerned that I had not been able to understand the local ways of knowing and relating. A writer asked, "since she is not from this area, does she really understand the people and their culture?" They questioned whether I had been able to see "both sides of what is happening or that she been unable to see through the smokescreen." I believe that my work is sufficiently grounded in diverse experiences and that it builds on information provided by insiders and double-checked against that provided from other insiders that I can offer a cogent, realistic account. I look forward to their responses when they see the actual document.

Comparing My Methods with the Approach Taken by the Office of Educational Accountability Team

Many at CHS an in the town did not know exactly what to make of my unusual, on site, long-term approach. But one thing was clear to both of us, they did perceive it to be considerably different from the approach taken by the state investigation team. Next, I compare these two methods to summarize the major advantages of conducting collaborative and creative participant observation, especially in a context of increasing suspicion and resentment of external evaluation.

The greatest differences between my research methods and those frequently used to assess a school's capacity to engage in reform stand in sharp relief when I compare my work with the state Office of Educational Accountability's (OEA) preliminary investigation of Central High. About a month after I began my fieldwork, the OEA announced that it was beginning important, but still preliminary, investigations into the Hickory County schools. As the flagship of the district's fleet, Central High was one of the major foci of their attention. Although their researches and my fieldwork were conducted parallel to one another, there are significant differences.

On an anonymous questionnaire about my research practices given at the end of the school year, I asked about their perceptions of my stay with them. These written comments corroborated information that I had gleaned from numerous interactions in the teachers' lounge, cafeteria, their classrooms, etc. In the spirit of collaboration and candid assessment that has been an integral part of my research from the beginning, I have integrated these comments into my own assessments of my methodologies.

In both settings, staff and faculty contrasted my work with their perceptions of the approach that the seemingly monolithic and distant "State" took. While these criteria for evaluating the tenor, impact, and ultimate worth of a study may differ from those generated by another set of respondents, their list highlights locally-relevant and crucial factors that were essential in making my fieldwork a success. First, they deemed my approach to be more personal. That is, my work was done "in a friendlier attitude," and motivated out of "personal concern not impersonal criticism." Knowing that they were recognized and valued as individuals by me rather than being lumped together into a mean, stereotypical characteristics was particularly important for faculty members who were sharply divided into factions. The majority of respondents felt that my work sought out the different sides equally, rather than just responding to whoever complained the loudest.

A second key difference was they felt that my work was collaborative and offered the potential for us both to learn more about what was happening among the different faculty factions and among the students at Central. They believed that the state had come to "judge and punish" but in contrast, my work and approach were "non-judgmental." They believe that the "state looks for trouble areas and is top-heavy on criticism." Compared to their apprehension every time there were rumors that state investigators were in the district, my daily conversations and observations were met with "No fear!" That particular respondent continued, explaining, "State evaluators are of a different nature and certainly for a different purpose." My work they deemed to be "completely different, this [is] a through [thorough] research without bias and external influence."

Another critical difference was that whereas they perceived the state's investigation as a real threat laced with impending and serious consequences, my work "offered no consequences for deficiencies, unlike the state." One respondent summarized the common sentiment that even if "her work probably isn't all that different, I'm sure her responses in return will be." Not the least of their concerns was that I did not have the power to hire anyone, fire anyone, nullify policies, or impose mandates. Throughout the year, people at Central, with very few exceptions, were "much more relaxed" with my questions, which they deemed "less intrusive." My work was, a respondent noted, "different as far as not feeling like you are under a magnifying glass, her work is a very positive help in a time of confusion." My questions, surveys, and classroom stays were aimed at "trying to help solve some of our problems" rather than create more problems for them, as they saw the state's actions doing.

By the end of the year nearly every survey respondent had worked with me in at least one if not many different capacities. They saw that I was serious about facilitating discussion and listening to whomever would talk. I had returned the data that I had been gathering to them (without respondents' names attached) and encouraged them to decide how they might use it for their own purposes. One of the sore spots in the local reaction to the state investigation was that although there were numerous innuendoes made to the school board and superintendent, little of substance was released. Local people felt that the OEA was being unduly secretive and coy. They were justifiably angry at the evaluators' patronizing and condescending actions. They wanted to know what was being written about them. Against this backdrop, I repeatedly offered my emerging conclusions for anyone who would read them. As a result, respondents described my work as "all inclusive free for all to see."

The knowledge that I came with no preconceived assumptions of guilt or wrongdoing, that they would be listened to privately and confidentially, and that I would share findings in a manner that facilitated discussion rather than fueled personal animosities all contributed significantly to the honesty and emotion with which people shared with me. Teachers recalled that they felt, as this respondent summarized, "No pressure - [we] can say what we think and not worry that we can be personally harmed by it." While it is impossible to know the extent to which teachers and staff were less than forthright in their private interviews with state evaluators, several conversations with educators at Central lead me to believe that people were more honest and extensive in their conversations with me. One teacher reflected on his attitude when questioned by a visiting evaluator. "Oh, they already *know* what they are going to find. Why would they come down if they didn't already know? They just have to go through the motions." So, he, continued, he just told them what he believed they wanted to hear.

In summary, staff and teachers designated my work as "more in depth." Another wrote, "I believe she can help us a lot with her findings, because no one before had tried to study our system with that method." A fellow respondent commented, "her work could be more valuable than the state, because she has spent more time here so far." Others expressed a bit of concern, for as this respondent noted, "I would assume the state would love to have the information she has gotten in order to do a state evaluation." Faced with a similar concern, I have continued to work closely with the Stanford Sponsored Projects Office to ensure that my work would be covered under their policies, and that the kinds of confidentiality and informed consent that I assured respondents would be respected.

Interests for Future Research

There are many intriguing paradoxes and problems that were generated by this research. If had had more time I would have expanded my circles of informants and added to the supplementary sets of questions that I asked. Looking back from the distance of a year later, I would be particularly interested in knowing more about the following. How do other non-involved families feel about Central High School? Are they aware of any of the reforms that are going on? What do they consider to be their "best" sources of information? Does it matter if they do not receive the local paper and no longer have any children who attend high school (even if they are 16, 17 or 18 years old)?

I am also interested in the role that religion plays. How do parents and teens from different religious traditions, especially Pentecostal or Holiness churches, view the public schools? Are such students more likely to check off the box indicating that they do not want to participate in my study than other respondents? If so, why? How do Christian ideas about humility and service influence actors' beliefs about why they do things, as well as why they should do things?

I believe that some of the next stages of this work will continue to build on metaphors of the mountain and their role in (young) peoples' emerging sense of person and place. How do young women and men think of the mountains - as borders, as fences, as barriers, as refuges, as dark and gloomy, as green and full of life? Many surprising images came out of the metaphor writing exercises and I hope to pursue these with the students.

I certainly would like to do more work on the concepts of "good old boys" and "loud mouthed women." This is only a preliminary sketch. I was particularly fascinated with the ways in which many "good old boys" recognized the paradoxes and conflicts of interest built into the code, yet stuck to it anyway. If more women venture to compete for administrative roles, they will certainly face misogynistic attitudes from former colleagues, students, friends, and even family. It takes a tough, committed person to take risks.

The survey that I administered to freshmen is a lodestone of information. I anticipate doing a follow up study during their senior year to check on consistency of career goals, attitudes about school, drop outs, young parenting, etc. Certainly this will be no mean task - it is likely that half of those surveyed will no longer be at Central. However, one good thing that I learned from my many, many afternoons traveling around with the truant officer is that neighbors tend to know what each other are doing. So, even if a young person seems to have disappeared, enough questions will probably lead me to them.

I also plan to administer the same survey to several more rounds of GED adult students. I want to get a wider sample and reach an n closer to the 61 for students and teachers.

APPENDICES

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INFORMED CONSENT IN RESEARCH STUDY ON KERA AND SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION

As a member of this class, you have had and will continue to have opportunities to write candid reflections of critical issues of concern to you and your school. I wish to invite you to become an important part of the research study that I, as a Stanford doctoral candidate, am conducting throughout this year at Hickory Central.

In the course of my work I am conducting interviews, meeting with classes, gathering essays, making observations, and being part of daily life here. One of my priorities is to gather first-hand accounts by students where they can say - in their own words- what they really feel. I believe that the more that my work reflects the concerns of many people and synthesizes many viewpoints the better it will be. The final report will be of benefit to many people, particularly the students and future students.

I wanted to give you more information about how my research is conducted so that you can make an informed decision about your participation.

First, all of my data is confidential, that is, no one's name will be connected with specific statements and made-up names will be used in the final report. I will not even say whose class the discussions took place in or for whom essays were written.

Second, if there is a class discussion that results from an exercise, I may take notes or tape the class in order to better remember the many things that are happening at once. I want to stress that the tapes are for my use only and will be destroyed after my research is over.

Third, you may always choose to participate or not. If you decide not to share a particular essay, you can always change your mind. Likewise, if you decide to have me read them, afterwards you can withdraw your consent. There will be no negative effect on your grade if you decide not to participate in an aspect of my study. If you wish not to be part of a particular discussion, you can ask me to stop taping it or you can decide not to participate in the discussion.

I believe that the benefits of being a part of this research study are many. Students in this class this year have an unusual opportunity to have their voices heard - with the protection of anonymity.

If you have any further questions or concerns, either about me or the study, my name is Maureen Porter and I can be reached at 362-9771. You could also call collect (1-415-723-4697) to my university and talk to the people who are overseeing my research (you don't have to give your name if you don't wish to). The extra copy of this form is yours to keep for reference.

Please check one:

__________ It is fine with me to be included in this study.

__________ I prefer not to have this particular essay become a part of the study, but I still wish to have the choice to participate later in other ways.

__________ I choose not to participate in this study at this time.

Signature ______________________________________

Printed Name______________________________________

Date ____________________ Year in school____________________

RESEARCH STUDY ON KERA AND SCHOOL SUCCESS

September 25, 1994

Dear Parent:

Your son or daughter is in Mrs. McCormick's English class and is working on a number of special writing projects. As part of this experience, the students have the opportunity to write essays on topics of interest to them, as well as about school in general. Because this is a particularly creative class with a great deal of student self-expression, I have selected this special group of students to work with more closely. With Mrs. McCormick's support, the students will be writing extended essays on some topics. These may be shared with the class, and in come cases, with me, Ms. Maureen Porter. I am a doctoral student from Stanford University who is in residence at Hickory Central this year to study how KERA may or may not be helping students become successful.

I wanted to let you know more about how my research is done and to let you and your student know that their rights and interests will be protected, both by me and by my university.

One of my priorities is to gather firsthand accounts of student thoughts about topics related to education in this area. Therefore, I work at the school, meeting students, listening to them, and talking with them about their concerns. This is another way to combine a required class assignment with data gathering that, I believe, will ultimately benefit both of us.

If there is a class discussion that results from an exercise, I may take notes and tape our discussions in order to better remember the many things that are happening in class at once. I want to stress that the tapes are for my use only. Although I may ask students' permission to interview them individually, all names will be kept confidential. Likewise, if I choose to use a student's writing in my report, I will specifically ask that particular student first, but will excerpt from it anonymously. No one's name will be connected to specific statements and made-up names will be used in the final report. After the study is done, all the tapes will be erased.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

The risks of being a part of this study are few and the potential benefits are considerable. The writing assignments are a required part of the course anyway, but if students do not want me to read them, they can say so. If anyone feels uncomfortable during a discussion, they can ask me to stop the tape or leave the room. The findings of this study will be available for you if you wish to see them or discuss them with me. In fact, I greatly welcome parents' opinions if you would like to share them! I anticipate that there will be many beneficial insights from the larger study for the schools, parents, and most importantly for the young people in Hickory County and elsewhere.

TIME

The study will take place during the regular class time, so you student will not need to be there for additional time. If your daughter or son is asked if she or he would like to do a follow-up interview, we would work together to find a good time and place.

RIGHTS

Your student does not have to be part of my study unless he/she wants to. He/she can choose to do the assignment (as he or she has been doing all along already) but decide not to let me read it. Even though she/he agrees to participate, she/he is free to later change her/his mind. The student does not have to answer any questions that make him/her uncomfortable. If he/she decides not to be part of an observed class activity, there will be no penalties and it will not affect her/his grade in the course, or participation in the other class activities that I am not observing.

QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

If you have any questions about either me or the study, I would be very happy to talk with you. I live here in Hickory and my phone number is 362-9771. You could also call collect (1-415-723-4697) to my university and talk to the people who are overseeing my research (you don't have to give your name if you don't want). The address is: The Human Subjects Office, 125 Panama St., Stanford CA 94305.

I look forward to getting to know your student better in the course of this year.

IF YOU DO NOT WANT YOUR SON OR DAUGHTER TO BE INCLUDED IN THIS STUDY PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM.

IF YOU DO NOT RETURN THIS FORM WE WILL ASSUME THAT IT IS OK WITH YOU FOR MS. PORTER TO SIT IN ON THE CLASS.

Date ______________

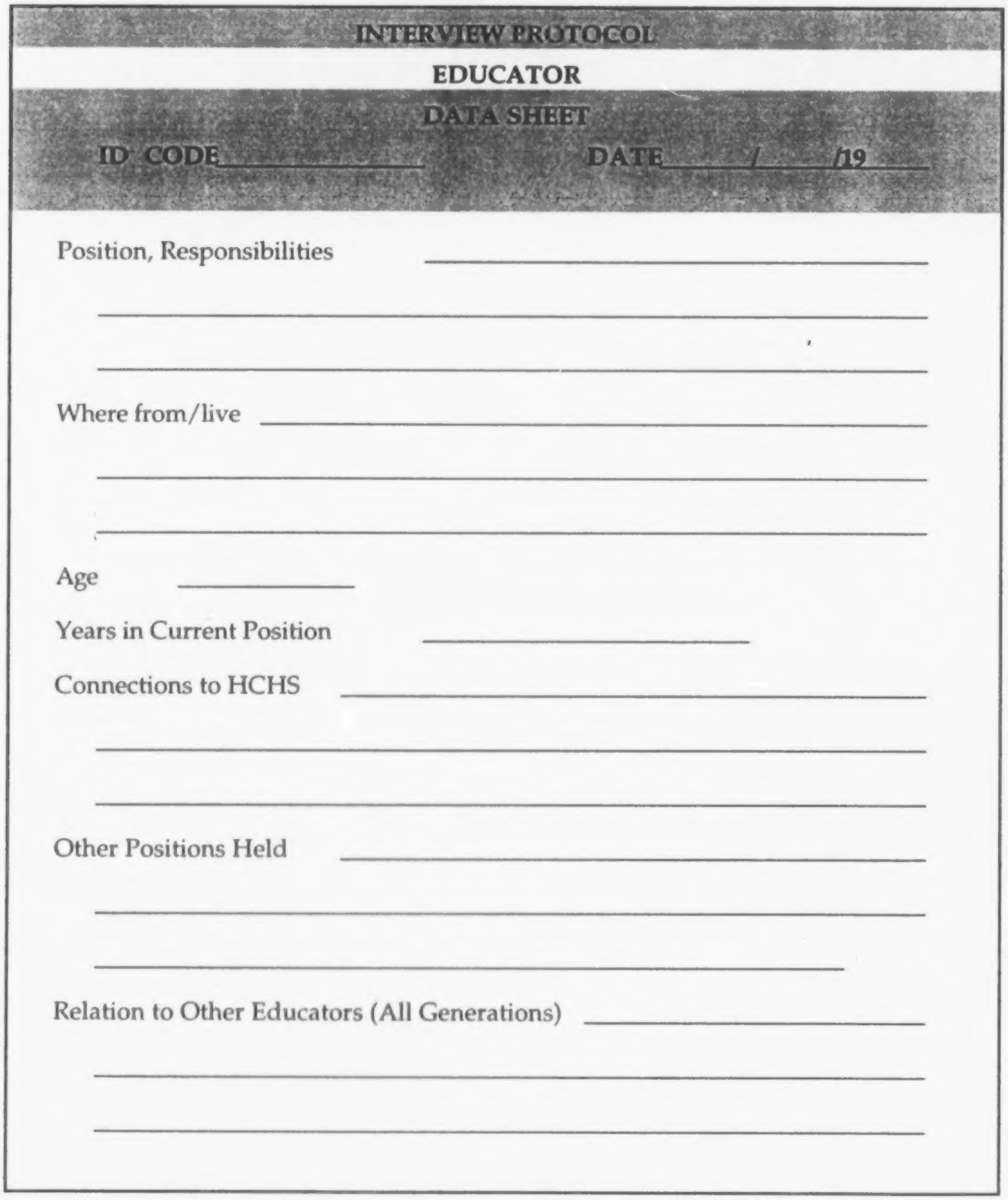
Student's Name ____

Parent's Name ____

Signature ____

SAMPLE OF INTERVIEW PROTOCOL COVER SHEET.

Similar cover sheets were developed for community leaders, parents, students.
Reduced to 80% size.



INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

EDUCATOR

DATA SHEET

ID CODE__________ **DATE**____/____/19____

Position, Responsibilities ____________________

Where from/live ____________________

Age __________

Years in Current Position __________

Connections to HCHS ____________________

Other Positions Held ____________________

Relation to Other Educators (All Generations) ____________________

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Initial Parent Survey

This was a collaborative effort that combined administrators' emphases and my questions. Most of these same questions had been regular topics at the preceding faculty meetings. Although this was available at the fall parent-teacher night, only 4 parents returned them to the sealed envelope. Three of the four were overwhelmingly positive and supportive, and one had a specific complaint to register.

Spacing is condensed for this bound format.

Dear Parents,

Over the last month, teachers, administrators and staff at Hickory High have been busy developing a School Transformation Plan that will be used in the coming years to increase student success. You, as parents, are important partners in this planning process. We invite you to write your comments on this survey and return this sheet to this site at the end of the evening, Please use the back if you need more room. The answers on this survey will remain anonymous (even if you decide to sign your name on the bottom), so feel free to write whatever you really feel.

1. What barriers at Hickory High keep students from achieving at their highest potential?

2. What aspects at HCHS are working and worth keeping?

3. Do parents have meaningful means of making their concerns known? What would you like to see done?

4. Do you think that the community is involved in and informed about what happens at Hickory Central High? What would you like to see done?

Would you like to be contacted by someone outside the school to share more of your opinions? If so, please write your name and phone (or another way that you can be reached) below. If you would like an interview, your name will **still remain confidential.**

FACULTY SURVEY I
SUMMARY

The following is a summary of the data gathered through the Faculty Survey I. I received 94.4 percent of the surveys back - that means only four people out of seventy-two staff and faculty members did not return a survey. A couple of people even went through the trouble of mailing them to me so that I would receive them in time. Every person who completed a Mid-term Review should be congratulated for being part of an important and new process here at Hickory Central. I also want to add my personal thanks for making this contribution to my evolving dissertation work.

I hope that you enjoy reading what you, as faculty and staff of Hickory Central, had to say. The summary below incorporates extensive use of direct quotes, with only minor editing for capitalization and spelling. I have summarized the data in a man-ner that seemed to make sense to me; you may have more insight as how to better or differently organize this complex data set. I welcome all comments and suggestions for further surveys.

As there have been several concerns about confidentiality, I wanted to openly describe the process that I went through to safeguard both the respondents and the data. I was asked to help work with the surveys because my interests significantly overlap with the principals' desire to assess the climate of reform here at Hickory Central and because I am a neutral observer trained in the statistical analysis of such survey data. As part of the orals proceedings that I had to go through to have my dissertation work here approved, I had to submit all parts of my work, including my plans for protecting confidentiality, to an ethics board. I have followed all of their recommendations, and have adapted additional measures that best fit the situation here at HCHS. I am the only one who knows who each survey belong to, no one else has had or has access to either the codesheet or the surveys. Following your concerns about protecting your candid responses, I transcribed the data from the Actual surveys. The surveys themselves and the only code sheet that exists are in storage in Wisconsin.

A summary of all the raw data is available to anyone who would like to see it. Because of its size (over 30 pages) I did not automatically make copies for everyone, but anyone may request a copy. There is a wealth of detailed information in it beyond what can be captured in a summary. Also, this data set preserves the richness of the many suggestions and comments that were not the most frequently mentioned, and thus tend to be underemphasized in a summary such as this. The responses have been randomized and then regrouped by frequency and content, so that no one particular respondent can be identified.

Maureen Porter

1. What is the most beneficial change from last year?
To what do you attribute this success?

There were by far the most comments about **discipline**. "Better discipline," was mentioned by several respondents as contributing to a better "student attitude toward learning," "an increase in positive student behavior," and "has helped maintain some discipline and stability for the students." The "written discipline code" or "set rules" were important in and of themselves, and provided clear guidelines for responding to misbehavior. One person pointed out "what has helped me as a teacher;" "I think the most beneficial change from last year is the discipline code, where teachers can report students who have misbehaved in class three times. I feel like the students think before acting because of the code."

However, rules without follow-through are counterproductive, as one respondent warned, "We now have more rules that are not enforced. I can't think of any [beneficial changes]." Three elements were frequently mentioned as critical to the success of the changes they saw, greater "consistency," "fairness," " and "enforcement." The following are representative responses of what respondents attributed current success to, from most to least frequently mentioned; 1) "the placement of 'rules' and 'policies,'" 2) "Mr. Newmann as Principal," 3) "administration and teacher cooperation and integration of a policy and enforcement," 4) "an improved discipline committee," and 5) the "site-base council finally being allowed to do their job." For future success, coordinated efforts need to continue; "the consistency in handling discipline problems has been a beneficial change for this school. This needs to continually improve, and has as teachers and staff are working together, as a team of educators."

Decision-making and goal-setting structures were mentioned as a second category of beneficial changes. Respondents noted that "things are more structured" and that we have been "focusing on and defining our missions and goals at HH." These include, but are not limited to "more structured plans to comply to KERA."

Most of the change was attributed to "the organization of committees and the fact that the committees are meeting and working and reporting back to faculty." "More faculty meetings" and "teacher participation in committees" are a start, but, as one respondent noted, there is "nothing [that] has really made a difference. There have been a lot of meetings, rules, and committees, but not a lot done." As another respondent wrote, the key is "to make the committees real (not just written as a mere formality) and to get them to work and come up with a useful program to improve our school."

Related to this category is the category of **communication**. "More communication between staff/teachers" and "more open communication" as well as the structural changes noted above were attributed to a "change in principals," the "new administration and Mr. Harris," an "administration willing to listen and act," and to "effective and caring leadership from our principals." Also noted were; the "openness of the principals to our ideas," the "acceptance of new ideas - [the] desire to learn what is going on in education reform and implement KERA at HICKORY HIGH. More teacher participation in committees. More requests for teacher input," and the "desire of administration to include teachers in decision-making process." A further comment elaborated on this category and identified another responsible body; "the most beneficial change from last year is the administration. There is a more caring, responsive, and professional attitude in the front office. The lines of communication have been opened and progress is continuously being made. This is extremely evident. Instead of everyone headed in difference directions with no realistic goals in mind we are forging ahead together with our eyes on the BIG PICTURE! I attribute this success to our Site Base Council receiving training in the principal hiring process and having the fortitude to make the right decisions despite attempted political influence."

A fourth category specifically identified greater emphasis on **KERA-related items** as a beneficial change. One person broadly stated "the most beneficial change from last year is everyone's attempt to reach the goals of KERA." However, most respondents focused on portfolios and testing as with; "better teacher training for portfolios with a much clearer view of our objectives," and "in-service training on open response and portfolio questions directed toward KERA initiatives." Thanks went to "the staff; principles [sic] and English teachers and the in-service time dedicated to improving our students standards."

Another frequently mentioned change was having a "**homeroom** between first and second period" and then "no afternoon break." One respondent noted, "we learned from last year's disorganization when it came to testing, pre-registering students, class meetings, etc. We lost our sense of pride in being in a 'senior homeroom' or a 'junior homeroom,' etc. because there was no homogeneous grouping."

Overall atmosphere was also mentioned, although with divergent comments. One person wrote "our most beneficial change has been the overall atmosphere of our school. In years past, we were very bogged down by manipulation, innuendoes, and controversy. At least two of these factors have improved this year. However, we are still knee-deep in controversy. I attribute the beneficial changes to our administrative staff turn over. Now instead of just one competent principal, we have three !!!" However, another respondent wrote, " I see no changes except for the faculty frustrations. We are be[ginn]ing to overload circuits."

Although most people wrote down at least one beneficial change, a significant minority expressed frustration. Many did not see any real change, or as these respondents wrote; "I do not see much change from last year as far as the student are concerned" and "Nothing. We're de evolving."

2. Target your top three school-wide needs improving areas. Be specific.
   Include suggestions for how to address these issues and who is the most appropriate person or group to implement solutions.
   If your list includes issues we have addressed in the recent faculty meetings, t then tell us how solutions are coming along.

Only two respondents did not list any areas that needed improving or stated that "I feel in most areas we are alright." The others easily listed at least three target areas, and sometimes expressed such concern that the answers spilled over into the margins and on the reverse side. This section elicited the strongest responses and the most consistently detailed statements.

Two major items were each mentioned by more than half of those surveyed. These top areas needing improvement were attendance and discipline. "**Attendance**" is, as one respondent wrote, "the first area that needs improving," While nearly all respondents simply stated the problem as "attendance," a couple of people phrased this problem as "students skipping class."

Three times as many people recommended positive rewards as negative sanctions as the means to address the issue. Numerous people felt that "incentives" should be a major focus. Specific incentives mentioned include "special prizes," "free passes to ballgames, sweatshirts," "the 'bookstore,'" and "monetary incentives (i.e. drawings for televisions (or larger prizes such as a car - yes, a car)." Some respondents also recognized that students need more far-reaching motivations to improve their attendance; we need to "give students a reason to be here." "Improving student interest will help with the problem to a certain extent, " one person wrote. Another continued

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this line of thinking with, "teachers can help this by making classes more interesting and encouraging students to succeed rather than fail. Block scheduling would help this also."

Those who listed negative sanctions as the most appropriate response usually were in line with the respondent who suggested "dire consequences in the main office for excessive absences." Respondents wrote that we should "drop the students who never show up" or recommended the "dismissing of those that inexcusably bring attendance down by the administration." Another felt that we should "let it affect their grade - 10 absences = F."

The responses given for who the most appropriate person or group is to implement solutions ranged widely. Answers given included "Mrs. Walker," "teachers and administration," "committees," and "the Central Center." The importance of collaboration and coordinated efforts was reflected in the comment "get parent, community and law enforcement involved and working together for the common goal. Each facet must have the backing of the others."

Discipline was the other major category. While many people previously mentioned this as something that has improved, "discipline is still a problem." One person expressed the general concern with "I really think discipline is worse this year than last year and in recent years. The fires really scare me, and the vicious fighting." Other frequently-mentioned aspects of the discipline problem were summed up in the comment "administration and faculty must deal more effectively with the current problems of Saturday detention, skipping out of classes, excessive tardiness and attendance."

Comments about **tardies** were an important subcategory. Respondents suggested stronger responses, reflecting one respondent's comment that "student's need to be disciplined on these heavier then, maybe they would think twice." Two suggestions made were a "5 page report (from individual teachers)" and "a number of tardies should count as an absence."

Once again, solutions to this issue revolved around greater enforcement and consistency. "If policies are passed, they must be enforced," and "principals need to follow through with the predetermined policy." Greater sanctions need to be applied, as "abusive offenders are not afraid - no action." Furthermore, "in the future we must reevaluate our current discipline policy and [unclear?] it. It would be beneficial to possibly revise or add more provisions to it." We should decide which rules are the most important and possibly "abolish nit picky (unnecessary) rules implemented here - ex. chewing gum."

A couple of people expressed concern that enforcement of discipline should be done "without sending a negative message to those who aren't usually discipline problems." "We have a large number of students who are conscientious, morally sound, worthwhile human beings, who are interested in an education. They are not trouble makers and they take responsibility for their actions. These people deserve better than they are getting. We are not taking care of them. We have to devote most of our attention and energy on students who do not want to learn and most of them do not want anyone else to learn. Our 'good' students have to be afraid for their personal safety, not to mentioned their personal property. Let's stop punishing the 'good' kids for what the 'bad' ones do. Let's stop barking at everyone and bite the ones who need it."

Concerns about the effectiveness of **detention** were particularly troubling to many respondents. "Students still have no consequences for actions - may or may not go to Sat[urday] detention - in-school suspension is not a threat." And "if a student does not choose to go to Saturday detention, I can't see that he's being punished at all." Another respondent felt that "the Saturday detention should carry a very weighted consequence if the students don't attend. This should be enforced and while the students are in Saturday School quality academic work should be produced. (The students should dread this!)" The long-term consequences of not making (Saturday) detention a success is that it undermines student "adherence to rules. Students aren't really afraid of Saturday Detention. Many think they can get away without attending. No real punishment. They really don't have a 'bad enough' situation to face as a disciplinary action. [The result is a] 'So what' attitude from problem students."

Another significant number of respondents would agree with the comment that "discipline must be more consistent. Students know it's no big deal to go to the office." While most people did not elaborate beyond this, one person wrote, "all students must be treated the same no matter if they are an athelete or the child of some socially prevalant person by all the principals."

"Discipline is the responsibility of everyone, including parents" sums up responses to who should work on solutions. However, most people only mentioned school personnel in their answers, perhaps reflecting the belief that "the most appropriate persons to implement this are principals, teachers, students." However, confidence in the ability of Hickory Central personnel to work together was lacking. Internal inconsistency showed up as a prominent concern in comments such as "the implementation of the discipline code is difficult because some of the members of the faculty do not care for it; instead instigate the students to complain about [it]." One person suggested "discipline workshops for the total staff. Stress the fact that the importance of discipline involves EVERYONE."

A third area of concern was **student achievement**. At the most fundamental level, half of the respondents in this category expressed frustration with the "reading skills" and "lack of basic knowledge of incoming students." One person suggested that we "screen all incoming students to verify they can read and write. If they cannot, then retain them in a special program at the elementary school level before they are advanced to high school."

Noting that achievement encompassed more than just performance, others suggested that "students attitudes toward academics" could be improved by "motivational methods to increase student achievement." Another person added that "teachers and administration attitudes [need to change] to believe that all students have worth and can achieve at higher levels. [We need to] eliminate options that allow students to perform at mediocre levels."

The other half of respondents in this category were concerned with "test scores," particularly "raising KIRIS test scores." Coordinated efforts by "all staff" toward this end were cited as the most direct way to address this issue; "we're doing better - more teachers are consistently using open-response questions." Further, a conscious effort to "increas[e] student understanding and awareness of how to answer open-response questions is the only way that these scores can rise (provided that all teachers are doing their jobs)."

"School grounds and **facilities**" comprise the fourth most frequently mentioned problem area. Respondents wanted "more modern facilities" with "better equipment to work with" and "computers in all classes." Responses, which were very brief in this category, seldom identified a party who should/could do something, the exceptions being "everyone," "teachers and staff, " and the need for "more funds."

The fifth category was **camaraderie and cooperation**. Respondents were concerned about the "lack of motivation" and "faculty involvement" and the "need [for] togetherness among teachers." Others mentioned "teacher moral [morale?!]." "Our faculty needs to have a bonding" to effect "attitude changes among faculty members. We need to try to work together - toward the same goals." Another person, frustrated with "back biting and lieing teachers" felt that "if everyone is in their room doing their job tales would be alleviated!"

A similar - and related - problem, the "**attitude and morale among students**" was also a common cause for concern. While one person described the problem as "student apathy," another identified the problem as one of "respect," citing "the 'No Fear' T-shirts - I think the student feel they have to live up to image." "We need an overall positive change in our students' attitudes about school. Many see it as a prison and as a negative requirement of life." Most of the suggestions for redressing this problem focused on sparking and holding "student interest - I would like to see students interested in attending school, have the desire to attend. They are going to have to be provided programs of interest. If a child can't read or is a poor reader, school must be very boring to him." Program ideas listed included "involving students in class projects, contests, etc. - make each student feel important" and "offer[ing] a wider variety of clubs, classes, activities, for ex. music composition, photography, speech and drama. Have interested teachers 'adopt' a students or group of students to help in needed areas." Respondents hoped improvements in this area would rub off in other areas of concern; "if we make school more attractive (it takes everyone) our attendance will improve as well."

Interruptions and movement were a seventh area of concern. While this category included "intercom messages! all through the day!!" most respondents were bothered by "students 'out of place' (academically and physically - in halls, bathrooms etc. when they should not be)." The reasons given for excessive and interruptive student movement included "students being turned out of class by the teachers" and "helpers in office bursting into classroom to get students and money!!" Two other sources of transient students were especially mentioned at length. "The in-school detention program should not allow students to be going to classes asking for work, talking to other students, and generally fooling around in the hall. They are suppose[d] to be separated from the free environment, as a correctional modification." And another wrote that "Alternative School students should be bused straight to facilities, eat at facilities, be picked up at end of day. These students should never be on school grounds to socialize. They're at Alternative to reform or modify their behavior, not to be rewarded with free time." The administration and faculty were listed as responsible for improving this problem. They should interact directly with students as "students react strongly to being 'bossed' by uncertified people." Another commented that to be effective "principals need to tell the guilty teacher" rather than making generalized comments at faculty meetings.

Accountability was an eighth area of concern, and one that is certainly related to other areas listed above. First was the concern that "across the board consistency is needed in terms of teachers and administrators supporting the many changes (discipline code and KERA) we are facing." A respondent stated that "it's time administration makes decisions and we go with them," adding the caveat "if we know what direction we need to go, make decisions based on needs instead of wants." This also applied to KERA-related changes; "more teachers need to apply KERA within the classrooms rather than continually denying that it is an important part of our schools or refusing to change because they disagree with KERA. We have much at stake and even if we disagree with some components of KERA, it is a necessity and reality that we must deal with."

Greater "consistency" and holding "everyone accountable for following policies, rules, and suggestions" was mentioned by numerous respondents as the key to success. "Teachers need to implement rules and regulations set by board and site base." However, "all teachers are not cooperating, even as we speak, with all the rules." "All of the faculty needs to participate in hall duty, bathroom duty, etc. and be on time." Providing a quality, challenging environment for education includes competence and effort in the classroom as well. One respondent, concerned about this aspect of accountability, wrote that there is a problem with "course 'structure' - I've heard many students talk of teachers and how some appear to do very little and require little work. These students have mentioned how they have learned nothing from those teachers. I think that, besides lesson plans, teachers should present to a principal samples of work required from students and be able to defend what they're doing with each class."

Other problems mentioned by several respondents included curriculum alignment, restructuring, parental involvement, and paperwork. Many people also wrote down detailed solutions, but did not attach them to any particular problem or attached them to several problems. These are listed in the data set.

3. Here is your chance to build a better mouse trap.
What would you ideally like see at Hickory Central if resources were not an issue?

Answers in this category reflected a concern for physical improvements. However, respondents often coupled recognition of the need for greater investments in materials and equipment with the increased desire and knowledge to make use of the new resources. Changes in attitudes and greater cooperation were necessary to best take advantage of the changes.

The largest number of respondents - slightly more than a third of those who gave an answer - stated that they would make improvements in Hickory Central's **facilities**. "The greatest limitation I see is that we work in a dilapidated and somewhat hazardous building" wrote one person. Poor facilities present more than just an issue of safety or access, they have an impact on student attitudes and behavior as well; "students do not respect the facility and seem to feel that they are not worthy of anything better because we are unable to give the best to them."

"**Remodeling** of areas or classrooms in need" was listed as a priority for change. "If we had the monies, we could improve the classroom atmosphere with upgrade[d] equipment, furniture, paint, and teaching aids." New items were also desired, including "sufficient supplies for labs and just for storage of files, equipment, etc." Another person mentioned that "we need numerous computer labs and possible workshops to better student achievement and the overall atmosphere of the school in general." "Expanding these resources" was seen as the key to meeting students' needs for "greater access to the school's resources (i.e. library, computer lab)." Several respondents specifically mentioned the need for "improved lab areas for science departments." One person elaborated, "I would like to see fully-equipped science labs for all science teachers. These would include not only individual desks for lectures, but also lab tables for lab stations." The impact of such changes would be felt beyond the high school classroom, "I think our science labs are where we are really lacking because if our students go to college unprepared they are really intimidated in college science labs." Other improvements included "more restrooms for teachers," "a parent room for parents to come in at any time to work with teachers and administrators," "an auditorium for performances (concerts) and plays," "another gym for PE and underclass basketball practice, so our players would not have to be out so late," "new baseball field and track," "classroom space," "new cafeteria and library," an "expand[ed] resource center," and "better facilities for the handicapped."

Almost half of the people who wanted to improve facilities felt that the solution was "**a new school with modern facilities**." "I would like a new high school like most other high schools here in the Upper Cumberland" commented one person, adding, "also, many counties also have new middle schools. Where are we going anyway?" This new building would haveall the amenities, including science labs and "all of the latest technology that['s] available." Several people also directly addressed the location of this school. The new building should be "away from the middle of the city" so that students are "unable to just walk away." Furthermore, being located "out of town" would "detour [deter?] uninvited guests." Another hoped that this school could be located on "at least one hundred acres of land."

So many people specifically mentioned improving **computer resources and technology** that it merits its own category. Ideally, respondents would like "computers in every room for every student." "Up to date!" software, including "programs for each discipline" is needed to go hand in hand with hardware acquisitions. Technology should be "everywhere - tied to everybody and available to ALL." Besides computers, respondents wanted one or more "laser disc players and laser discs," a "video projection machine," a "computer projector for overhead," "computers and VCR's in each classroom," and "CD players and CDs." Several respondents also wanted to put "attendance and grades on computer." "Computers and other modern equipment must take the workbase off administrators and teachers if we are to do what we do best, teach and supervise." Another added that we need "a computer in office to take attendance and cut down the tremendous, unnecessary, ridiculous paperwork!! Teaching cannot take place with all we must do with PAPER!!"

The third category for this improved mouse trap included expanded **curricular offerings.** "I would like to see students being motivated and challenged to learn. This could possibly be done by offering a wider variety of classes," wrote one respondent. While one person defined an "expanded curriculum" as "more teachers for variety of courses," others focused on expanded "programs to meet the diverse needs of our students. Not all students are college-bound. Some students see no need for an education in the core curriculum." That person stated that "a specialized training program in 'hands on' needs to be implemented. The vocational school could be a key concept. Have an end product produced each year with all the different vocational programs involved in the making of it." Others desired the restoration of "driver-educ[ation]" and increased "funds for the Gifted/Talented program." Success depends on "students being able to participate in extracurricular activities - transportation for all of them." Another noted that "all teachers [need] to see the importance of extra curricular activities, 'even athletics.' "

Reduced class size is the fourth category of change. Respondents suggested "no more than ten people per class" and "English and core classes limited to 15 students" if not a "15 cap size in every class." This would provide "lots of time for individual instruction."

The fifth category was addressing **school spirit and atmosphere**. Respondents wanted "better attitudes and more students who are willing to learn." However, change was not limited to students, another respondent wanted not only "a school where the majority of the students are excited about learning, " but also "where all teachers are willing to work toward this goal also." To be successful, this efforts needs "every student, every faculty member and administration striving for the best learning environment possible." This could include "school-wide participation in certain activities to generate unity among teachers and students." The ultimate goal would be, as one person wrote, for "people in the community to say I want my child to go to H.C. It['s] a good school."

Concern about resources and the distribution of **resources** comprised the sixth major category. Asked to describe the ideal mousetrap, one respondent felt that "teachers should have an unlimited source for classroom supplies and teaching aids." "More things [should be] bought for all classrooms so that students could get more hands on experiences in the classes they are taking." Changes in the acquisition and distribution of resources were also mentioned as areas for change. One person wanted there to be "no bid list - accept receipts for items bought to give us a wider variety of choices and to make spur of the moment purchases easier." Another commented that "teachers lack resource materials and what instructional money we do have is not divided equally. The department heads ultimately have the say in the dollar amount each individual teacher receives, which means that some teachers receive hundreds of dollars for materials they want while others' needs are seen as too small or undeserving."

In addition to material resources, greater human **resource people** were desired. Specific ideas included; a "staff lawyer to deal with students," a "grant writer," "paid academic coach's and assistants," and "reading and writing specialists." "Also," added another, "we need six more security people to patrol our too many buildings on campus to keep students in line."

Incentives were also mentioned by several people and constitute the eighth category. Incentives could be given for "for high achievement, attendance, etc." and would be for "both students and teachers who excel." Those who listed incentives often linked them with particular outcomes; "if resources were not an issue, I would think that our school and country would do everything possible to raise our attendance rate" and to "keep [students] motivated to attend and learn in school."

4. My greatest personal achievement this semester has been . . .

For almost half of respondents, success centered on "any **achievement** my **students** experience." Respondents were proud to be "pushing my students more - emphasizing responsibility," "upgrading student[s'] use of technology in my classes," and "seeing that students are accountable for class materials." One person felt satisfaction in "gaining some students respect, in that they are working on academics." Several people agreed with the respondent who wrote that he/she has seen "the tremendous increase in my students' effort and capabilities. They are learning the teacher is not the enemy." Getting "students actively involved in successful experiences" may be related to seeing "students succeed in their studies. They've set goals for themselves and have achieved them."

A few people specifically mentioned "portfolio training" as an area of concentration. One person reported being proud of "motivating students regarding portfolio tasks [by] making them meaningful and exciting." Another worked on teaching "my students how to answer open-ended response questions and to better prepare them for the state test."

For more than half of the respondents in this category, reaching even **one student**, making "a major breakthrough with one specific self abusive child" was the greatest personal achievement. "Seeing one student achieve to his highest ability" or "reaching 2 students I was concerned about" was key. Helping some overcome obstacles, reaching out "to involve some students who, at first, seemed only to be trouble," and "helping [student] pass his second freshman year" were cited by others. The importance of a few students as sources of motivation was reflected in the comment that one person's greatest achievement was "being in the classroom, and teaching to the few who want to learn."

Almost a third of respondents felt that their greatest accomplishments were in the areas of **professional and pedagogical practice**. "Being more abreast of issues dealing with education" and "learning about new ideas being incorporated at other schools in regard to students success" were listed. Most people, however, gave personal changes in classroom "instruction" as their main focus. Many people noted practices such as "better, detailed lesson plans," "learning to organize my lesson plans better," "staying focused on lesson plans and completing learner outcomes," and "seeing things to be a little more organized and structured." A major accomplishment for one person was keeping "all my work in the classroom up to date and turned in on time, such as reports, tests graded, etc." Several people embraced "some new teaching techniques," including "successfully implement[ing] teaching strategies in my own classroom that I have devised myself." Others taught "new classes that I haven't taught before" and "different material this year with a great degree of success."

Other respondents mentioned specific extra-curricular programs that they worked on, successful field trips, new programs, coaching, directing, and special projects that they were proud to have developed or completed this semester.

4. My greatest personal concern this semester has been . . .

Have you brought this to anyone's attention?
If you have, was the response satisfactory?
If you have not mentioned it, what could be done to best address this issue?

The greatest area of concern for faculty and staff encompassed problematic **student attitudes** "towards learning and school." "Student apathy toward learning" and " a lack of student motivation" were frequently cited, as was a "don't care attitude." Respondents linked "the lack of personal worth by my students and their lack of motivation to complete their academic studies," adding that for some kids, "they have such a low self-esteem. . . that they can't stay focused on the subject." Other respondents were concerned about "disrespect for teachers from students [and] disrespect between students themselves." The "lack of motivation and respect from students. . . may be part of our attendance problem - some students don't know why they're here."

Respondents varied widely as to whether they had brought this to anyone's attention or whether there had been any success. Some of those who had brought up these problems still "don't know" a lasting solution to issues of motivation. One teacher mentioned the problem of lack of concern for academics and "the answer I got was to try to make class as interesting and appealing as possible. I have tried that. It works for a few days and then wears off." Another stated that she/he hasn't "brought this to anyone's attention. I suspect that a way to address this problem would be for teachers to be given an occasional sabatical. I think that it teacher's show excitement for what they're doing then the students, too will get some of that and the motivation starts."

"The students['] lack of concern or sense of responsibility for their actions and grades" was reflected in poor **student achievement.** One person's greatest concern was "overlooking the obvious . . . a larger percentage of our students cannot read or write." This had far-reaching consequences, for, as one person wrote, "the classes, in general, are much slower than before and less deep in their reasoning." These problems have "been discussed at several faculty meetings with no clear answer." One person, concerned "that each of my students learn to think for themselves and not have to be 'spoon-fed' on everything" felt that some progress had been made, "we are currently addressing th[ese] issues as a faculty by implementing the use of open-response questions within our classroom units." However, multipronged solutions and preventative measures were seen as important by others who identified that "the problem seems to come from the elementary school" or asked "as a whole how do we change their attitudes without help from their homes?"

Student discipline was also of great personal concern to another third of respondents. "Areas of misbehavior with students, such as fighting and smoking" remain a problem. "Safety and discipline in the hallways" as well as "in my classroom" and "the regular students picking on the special ed[ucation] students" were answers also given. Others cited general violence at school" or "student vandalism of equipment [computers.]" "DISRESPECT" and "students' 'testing'/'pushing their luck' type attitude causes an individual to have to be more stringent than preferred" wrote one person.

Twice as many people did bring their concerns to someone's attention as did not. "Yes, I have brought it to Mr. Newmann's and Mrs. Walker's attention. The response was satisfactory" stated one person. Some progress was reported by another, "I feel like the students know what the rules are about smoking and fighting and may not participate in them as much because of the good discipline methods being used." However, two-thirds of those who did report their concerns were not satisfied with the outcome. " I was laughed at" stated one person. Others are still waiting for stricter policies or "so far I haven't heard anything as to what or how this will be dealt with." Frustration with a lack of effective measures was reflected in comments such as there's "nothing that can be done," or, regarding attendance, "Most of them have no desire to attend. . . but apparently, the parents can't make them come." Another respondent, concerned about student disrespect for rules, stated that "I have spoken about it and we cannot suspend the students necessary to make the others take notice. What we should have done is laid off detention the 1st month or so and taken 10 to 15 students to 1st, 2nd, 3rd detentions. When these refused we should have publicized their suspensions! Only then would others respect a law that was enforced. We would not lose that much funding then."

"Students attitudes toward the new discipline policies" concerned other respondents. Respect for rules and leaders, as modeled by teachers, may contribute to "the attitude that many of my students have about school. They are told by some teachers and administrators that they do not have to stick by the changes and are exempted from the rules, defacing the teacher. I would cite equal treatment of teachers and students as a large problem."

Dissension among teacher ranks, "the lack of cooperation among the faculty," and "internal fighting" all contribute to a third major area of concern, **faculty and staff cohesion**. "It's been hell!!" summed up one respondent. A few phrased the problem as "the lack of concern and participation demonstrated by a minority of teachers at H.C." and those who "are unaware, unconcerned about changes taking place all around us." These changes themselves were cited by several as sources of conflict, there is "a feeling that changes have occurred with the belief that the end justifies the means." Another stated that there are "too many committee decisions with decisions made by a few key people." Both respondents recommended open discussion and communication, and "identifying reasons behind proposals, weighing everyone's input." Overall, the "amount of conflict and negations that I see" were deemed oppressive, as were "the politics implemented at this school. We have too much back stabbing by teachers and administrators and site-based [members]." This further hampered open discussion, for fear of "saying the wrong thing to the wrong person."

Respondents in this category were unlikely to be satisfied with the response, even if they had brought it up. However, some were hesitant to bring it to anyone's attention, "because it won't change anything." Another stated that he/she did not because "I feel that this should be evident to anyone who is interested!!" One respondent with concerns about "professional courtesy" was met with "a smile, a nod and . . ." That person wanted "people to have the [#%@%] to stand up for what is right and fair and professionally correct!" One person who was more satisfied with the outcome of her/his approach to bringing up concerns had talked to "several teachers who share this same concern."

5. Please finish the following statement.

Any future plans for Hickory High must . . .

My favorite answer: "work!"

Several people answered the question by **defining** what they felt that future plans for Hickory Central must achieve. We must "come from the renewed commitment from all involved to excel in every possible way" and ultimately "establish a positive learning involvement in which the students have a purpose and goal upon completion of high school." Plans need to "be realistic, be carefully planned - not trial and error" and "be of change, and in a positive light." The success of future plans will "depend on the success we have in the policies we now are implementing" and will need to "continue to strive to improve, upgrade all standards; academic and discipline, [and] hold steady to the new improvements."

"The **students** of H.C." were the primary focus of numerous responses; future plans must be for the "improvement of the learning atmosphere for the students, not a power struggle for special interest groups." We must "1st take into consideration 100% of the students that live in Hickory County because this education facility can make or break each individual's life." Future plans must "include the betterment of the students both academically and personally. They must see the need for an education early in life and be willing to strive for one. We in turn must meet these needs." Another respondent added that we must "address student preparation for the future. We allow students to float through high school without ever being challenged. They exit unprepared for life."

In order to achieve these changes, respondents acknowledged that the major focus must be on the **involvement of all faculty**. Future plans must "have the total commitment and cooperation of all faculty. We need to make a unified effort to improve the school environment." Plans must "include the backing, support, and belief that we will succeed by all [being] involved, top to bottom, support and cooperation." "The faculty must stand together to support this change" because "until then teachers learn to work together they cannot reach the students." Consensus building was deemed important, and discussions must "include the opinions of all the faculty and students." Such discussions required a "professional attitude from all our faculty." However, most respondents focused on voting, expressing the desire that plans "be discussed and voted on by the faculty and staff before it is implemented." While decisions should be "made by the entire faculty," most respondents would be satisfied with the support "of a majority of the faculty." "The faculty should vote on such issues as rules, scheduling, and then site-based should honor it[s] faculty" added another person.

Other respondents expanded this concept to include all major groups; decisions should "involve a commitment from" and "be agreed upon by **all stakeholders**." Plans should "consider the needs of everyone" and "include everyone's input, such as teachers, parents, students, and principals." Others added administration and communities to this list. However, paramount was that everyone be included equally and have "everyone working together first" as well as "everyone being treated equal."

Further comments once again addressed the importance of taking current student achievement levels into account, making students accountable for "their actions and inactions," improving attendance, and considering a new facility. See the raw data for other suggestions.

6. Do you feel that all faculty members have sufficient opportunity to participate in decision making?
Is everyone's opinion valued?
Are all people involved who wish to be?
What is holding back those who are not fully engaged?

This is also a question that generated heated and detailed responses. More than three times as many people answered "Yes" to most or all of the first three questions as answered "No." Almost half of respondents did not specifically formulate their answer to the questions as listed, but instead gave general answers that often indirectly mentioned the concerns intended in the questions.

Of those answering all four questions, and answering "Yes" to the first, almost one-fourth stated "no," "don't know," or not "necessarily" to the second. A similar proportion, and usually the same people, answered "maybe not" or "probably not" to the third question. However, most of the people who felt that all have sufficient opportunity to participate also believed that everyone's opinion was valued and that everyone who wishes to be is involved. In contrast, all of the people who responded "no" to the first question and answered all four questions directly also gave a "no," or even a "Hell no!" for each subsequent question.

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Not surprisingly, the reasons given that hold back those who are not fully engaged also differed significantly between these two camps. " 'No' group" respondents blamed inaccessible and inequitable **decision-making structures** and bodies for the break down. "Some of the faculty is left out in the decision-making progress," wrote one person, and "when input is allowed, it is ultimately ignored" added another. "I feel like decisions are made even before we voice our concerns" echoed another respondent. Concern that "only certain people" have influence was voiced, and the complaint that there is "too much power struggle between teachers - seemingly administrators favor certain teachers upstairs." This "fear and mistrust of administration 'favorites'" contributes to the feeling that "I believe that it is more political than ever before. The only difference is, the players have changed. People who wish to be involved, but have opinions that differ from the opinions of the people in power are afraid for their jobs." Another stated that "the wish is not to 'rock-the-boat.' Our faculty as a whole is too judgmental." The "Site Base Council" was also implicated in a couple of responses. "We as a faculty seem to be in the dark on major site base decisions" wrote one respondent. Another commented, "SBCM is the worst political machine ever invented. It out classes the old board of ed[ucation] system 5-1."

On the other hand, the " 'Yes' group" blamed disengaged members **themselves** for their non-involvement. "If anyone is held back, I believe it's their own choice" was a common sentiment. Non-participants were deemed "apathetic toward the success of H.C." Other respondents felt that "those who are not [involved] hold back due to the lack of effort on their part." It's "because they are not committed individuals" wrote another.

These personal "attitudes" were coupled with interactions with other people and structural issues in determining the final level of involvement. Thus, there emerge six main reasons were given for non-involvement; lack of interest, time constraints, lack of desire to change, being unaccustomed to being asked for input, fear of reprisal, and non-consideration of their input. Even for those who are interested or who might be interested, "**time limitations**" may make it "nearly impossible to become fully involved in anything additional." "Some individual[s] don't care and don't want [to be] involved because of the extra work" one respondent added. However, a couple of people questioned whether sufficient opportunity and invitation had been extended to all, writing that they "may not have been asked."

"I'm not sure," wrote one person, "but **intolerance to change** (closed mindedness) may be the rest of the problem." Those who are "not fully engaged [need] to get with the program and [be] willing to change." This may not necessarily be the easiest thing to do; "the word change is holding all of us back to a certain degree, as we are all fear-ful of the unknown." However, one respondent wrote that this is only an excuse and that "faculty and administration members who are not fully engaged seem to be those that have a personal ax to grind - [they] do not want to change because of what might be required to them."

The fact that there has been a concern for greater faculty (and staff) involvement this year may be, in itself, an obstacle to overcome. "Not all faculty members feel the need to get involved. In years past faculty members have sometimes had no say-so in important decisions. This has caused an evasiveness on the part of our faculty. Regardless, however, of who is in the office there are some who feel that their opinions mean little; so they do nothing to benefit Hickory Central in return." Another stated, "I don't know if everyone's opinion is valued nor if all who want to be, are. However, if there are some it may be because they are not use[d] to be asked their opinions or may be reluctant to express opinions due to fear of ridicule (or back stabbing)."

Many of the respondents in this group did express similar concerns as those in the "No" group in their observations that people who are not involved may be concerned with **rejection** by peers and/or administrators. Respondents felt that non-involved people believe that "their opinion doesn't count" or that "not everyone's opinion is valued by certain people." They may be "intimidated by those in charge," but, as one person wrote, they also face censure by other teachers and staff. "The administration seem to value our opinions," wrote one person, "but we are so severely judged and shunned by other teachers for our professional opinions. This is an impedus [impediment?]." Intra-faculty "intimidation" and censure exists, according to one respondent, "within the department. I think some of our problems could be worked out with a little more communication. Some teachers feel that their voice is not heard."

However, a couple of respondents cautioned against taking nay-sayers' complaints too seriously. "Our faculty doesn't always want a voice until decisions are made and they don't agree with them. Then they say they didn't have a part in making those decisions" stated one person. "Some people would rather complain."

Despite the division, several respondents with "Yes" answers to the first questions felt that "those that don't make decisions should get involved in the process." Another located responsibility with the leadership of the school, "administration needs to make decisions and hold everyone accountable for implementing change, whether it be teaching, methods, or attitude."

7. What is hindering parent participation at Hickory High?
   Who can or should do something about this?
   What have the responses been to your efforts to communicate with parents and community members?

This question generated the most consistently lengthy answers, and nearly everyone gave an answer to all three parts of the question. The state of parental involvement was summed up by a respondent who wrote, "most parent participation is at the elementary level. H.C. seems to [be] in a different world. Students come to H.C., parents stay at the elementary."

A few respondents felt that "**nothing**" was hindering parent participation. "They have every opportunity to be involved but you must understand that in this region a lot of parents don't care." Others elaborated on the theme of not caring, stating that "parents do not seem to care about their son or daughter," and that "I think that many parents are indifferent to what's going on here, or in their kid's lives" or "Parents don't care! They have no sense of work and are not interested in their children or the school system."

The largest group, almost a third, of responses cited "parent **apathy**" as the biggest obstacle. Parents were seen by this group as having a "lack of interest" and "lack of parental concern." "I believe parents are more content to sit back and blame teachers" stated one person. However, another pointed out the reciprocal nature of this problem; "we allow parents to not be involved in students['] education." And another added that although "parents are hindering themselves[, e]ventually more parents may get involved if we continue to try to involve them."

Respondents often linked "apathy and **distrust**" in their answers and many elaborated on issues of alienation that they felt were exacerbating the situation. Most parents are not used to being involved as "they have never had a need to be involved unless their child has been in trouble." "I think unequal treatment and a feeling of not being heard is a problem." As a result of bad experiences, "most of our parents feel that they are not a part of our system. They sometimes feel intimidated." Another

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respondent added that a further consequence of this may be that "the only parents involved are those with negative attitudes toward Hickory county people."

School personnel are not the only ones who were seen to shun parental involvement, a "majority of **students** don't want the parents to be here." While for their part some "students don't want them involved," some "parents don't feel as if they are valuable in their 'growing' child[']s needs. That is, I think they feel unneeded."

Another large group of respondents cited **low levels of education** and a (subsequent) **lack of enthusiasm for education** as major factors. One respondent phrased the problem as the "educational background of parents - they feel threatened, unworthy." This discomfort may be particularly heightened in interactions with school personnel. "I feel that most parents are intimidated by the teachers. Some feel they are looked down on because they are less educated and may not dress as well as the teachers. Things like this keep parents from participation." Lack of success with education in the past, and low levels of high school completion were linked with non-support for graduation, as in the comment, "most of the parents are not educated and therefore they do not stress the importance to the children." Even if "nobody" else is hindering parent participation, change will not happen unless "people . . . want and see a need for education."

Some parents are hindered in their desire to get involved by **lack of knowledge**, especially about KERA reforms. "[Eighty-five] % of parents don't have a clue about education," wrote one person. There is a "lack of the parents['] realization that their help is needed" and, further, a "lack of information about how they can help and a feeling of not being welcomed." This "**lack of encouragement** [comes] from teachers and involved parents to other parents."

A few respondents felt that a **lack of time** played an important role. A couple of people, however, did note that even if parents did want to get involved "they probably have other things to do. Like work."

When answering who should do something about this, many people gave several answers, or pointed to the idea that it would take a **joint effort** by teachers, parents, staff, students, administrators, the central office, PTA, "community awareness people," and "community services." "We should all address this," wrote one person, "especially the school community relations committee." Joint programs and "community meetings in cooperation with [Social Service] Centers" and "work[ing] closer with other organizations were all suggested. The PTA received several comments, even one respondent's feeling that efforts must "start with PTA." Another noted that "the PTA was formed to utilize parent involvement. However, not even the PTA can 'make' adults get involved."

Several respondents offered **program or practice** suggestions for increasing the opportunities for parental involvement. "The school could have things such as parents night, and activities in which parents could get involved." A scheme to boost parental participation might be to "require parents to participate in student registration by holding it at night and having parents work with students and teachers toward educational goals." Another person whose experiences with parents had been positive stated, "we are making a valid attempt to include parents this year, and I think we are reaching most of those who read the news, and are in contact with their children." This comment hints at the importance of increased **publicity**, a component deemed important by others in any plan to reach parents. "I think that the one major thing that may help change that would be for the school to show what it is doing (publicity)." "I know all meetings involving parents can't be scheduled for everyone, but every effort should be made to let them know about important events. Announcements can be made by radio and newspaper." Additional lines of communication could be opened through "announcements, calls, [and] *standard letters of schedule of meetings [that could be sent] to every home!"

While many people came up with several groups that could work together to solve the problem, just as many respondents had no answer. If respondents skipped any part of this question, they left the part about who could make a difference blank. Or a few wrote something like, "I'm at a loss for an answer."

As many people reported that responses to their efforts to communicate with parents and community members had been positive as negative, and half again as many reported that responses were mixed. Some those who had **negative** responses or "very little response" felt that school personnel should keep trying despite the often overwhelming challenge. Most of the people who experienced negative responses attributed parents' disengagement to internal factors in the parents, e.g. "they don't care," and "I have gotten an 'Oh, well' attitude with most parents." "Most seem to be annoyed by the effort" to contact them answered one person, and another had received comments like "leave me and my kids alone." They were more likely to attribute problems to internal factors than structural problems such as lack of opportunity or resources. But even resources could be (used as) a potential barrier to participation, for as one person wrote, "the majority are quite disinterested. I can honestly say that also because of my [activity] sponsorship. (They might be willing to give up a little money but no time. And that's what we need the most of.)"

Those respondents who felt that most of their interactions with parents had been **positive**, reported that while for the non-involved, internal factors were hindering participation, those who were "very helpful and supportive" overcame these obstacles. A respondent noted that some parents "seem pleased" by the increased emphasis on contact, and "wanted information about their child" however, "community reaction to school changes have been mixed." Many of those who gave mixed reactions stated that the reaction is "very positive from parents who really want to be involved," but "some could care less." However, the messages they receive are also mixed, for, as one person remarked, "some are concerned, but some will cover for their child's wrong doings instead of putting the truth."

8. What projects or programs would you most like to see the PTA work on this year?

Improving **attendance**, once again, was a top priority. Although few people elaborated on this, most concentrated on "attendance incentives" or even "attendance projects." One person added "the PTA would be great (along with the school and community relations committee) at gather[ing] community leaders for donations for attendance incentives."

Running a close second was the desire for "**more parent involvement**" with curriculum and "with their kid's education." "[Ninety] % of education begins at home with parent instruction. The majority of our students have 0% instruction at home." Parents were seen as needing to "promote more academics" and to work toward building "better unity between parents and faculty." In order to accomplish this, we may need "parent/public education about the entire educational process. People need to know what goes on in schools, and what teachers and administrators actually do."

A subgroup of respondents thought that "parent volunteers in classrooms" would be a good idea, as well as getting "parents involved in tutoring [and] teaching students to read." Others suggested help with portfolios, perhaps even a "Parent Portfolio Partnership."

Involving the PTA and parents in **special projects** was next on the list. Not all of these required financial contributions, although most did. Whether for "teacher and student appreciation" or helping "pay or supplement some fees required of students (ex.

diplomas, fee for A.P. test, caps, gowns)," their help was appreciated in years past. Additional ideas presented were "computers" and "better facilities" and "ID cards for all students." A dozen respondents wanted the PTA to focus on "more projects student related." These included "programs to help students improve the climate of the school (upgrade student interests, concern about academics, school property - upkeep, help in school pride)." These and other "projects that encourage good discipline" and perhaps even "upgrade values" could potentially contribute to "school spirit and district wide change." "Programs (performances) for our students" could involved all school members, or target underserved/needy groups such as the "academic team" or "over-achievers."

A significant minority of comments questioned the very **legitimacy of the PTA** as a representative, inclusive body of parents, or a group that, at least in the past, had made positive contributions. "Get in the real world," stated one respondent, "they no way/no form represent the typical Hickory county parent - and live their own life completely unaware there are people different than them." Others most wanted to see the PTA "support rather than criticize." Members should "be more of an asset toward assisting our teachers and school and less impact on how to run our school."

'Perhaps poor previous relations with the PTA, or lack of confidence in them made many respondents not give an answer to this question at all, or feel, as one person wrote, "I don't care." More than twenty percent of those surveyed did not write in an answer at all, the largest percentage of any question.

9. What incentives do you think would be sufficient to motivate students to attend regularly?
How could we improve our system of keeping track of students?

Perhaps the most effective answer: an "electric fence around school - Ha! Ha! Just kidding!!"

Money prizes, and trips were the most frequently mentioned incentives. "Money should be assigned to this problem!" declared one respondent. These resources could be used for "cash" prizes and/or "scholarships for perfect attendance." Faculty and staff should not be forgotten either, we should "give teacher bonuses for perfect attendance" too. One person even suggested we "institute a system that pays every student $10,000/year. Pay them $1000/month."

Prizes were also often given as possible motivators, as long as they "are items that they would be interested in." Such rewards might include "CD players," "the school breaks and store," "parties," and even group awards such as "club parties." Several people mentioned that "because the school has no excess money to spend, the local businesses could become involved with rewards for attending regularly." Others mentioned that "'sacrifice' ideas" and rewards that came from "administrators and teachers" who made "commitments to do something as incentives (ex. prin[cipal] shaving his head)" would make a difference.

Sponsoring **trips** was another frequently suggested response. "Field trips" and "class trips for attendance" were mentioned. Other activities in "positive interest areas" that may involve new opportunities or even travel were "photography" and "swimming classes."

Several respondents noted that as good as these ideas might be however, "I'm not sure that it will influence all students." "Incentives work sometime. However, troubled children from troubled homes need help - from social services, the courts, etc. We [should] have a psychologist on staff." Thus material rewards need to be coupled with **rewarding relationships** and a **positive environment** to develop intrinsic motivation to attend. As one respondent put it, "community support from businesses for tangible rewards [is important] but I still think letting the student know he's important and motivating his interest would be best." "Students need to see a light at the end of the tunnel." This is a complex effort that depends on the success of other efforts as well, for as one respondent noted, "higher teacher moral[e] builds desire and leadership qualities that instill interest and desire into our students." The environment must also be welcoming. It would simply help if "we could not treat them like idiots. The worse we treat them, the worse they will act." And, as another person wrote, we need "rules made sensibly and intelligently and teachers who love and care about their children."

Respondents often gave more than one suggestion, and about twenty suggestions were devoted to **negative** incentives. These were mostly divided among disciplinary actions, penalizing grades, and cutting welfare for non-attendance. Respondents in the **discipline** group wanted "negative sanctions" and better "follow up on violations." "Until we do something with the kids who lay out we will not have good attendance. I do not believe you can make a student attend who really doesn't want to. The[y] are only a disruption when they are here." Some felt that chronic truants or "students who missed 10 days or more a semester [should be] required to participate in a 'night school' to [prove??] desire to attend school." Or, they should be eliminated from the ranks altogether; "students who miss repeatedly should be placed in a juvenile detention center where they must attend school. Try a little bit of punishment instead of all the 'give away' programs."

One respondent wrote that "using certain incentives or results really doesn't attack or address this problem. A plan of punitive action must be devised to make students realize they risk **losing (something) important** if they don't attend class." For some students, an effective measure might be to have their "driver's license taken away."

Another group wanted students to "suffer dire (**grades**) consequences for absence." They wanted to "make their grades dependent on it." Another person wrote that "if making up were a little more difficult they will not miss school that much."

A larger and impassioned group wrote that "parents must assume responsibility for the students['] attendance." Perhaps one way to make the family feel the consequences would be to "**cut their money off.**" "For welfare, SSI recipients" we should "make school attendance mandatory to receive benefits." This would require that the "law [be] changed," which one proponent of "cut[ting] money from their checks" noted, "we as a school can do nothing about."

No matter what form of redress was preferred, or even if people think that "the present system we have is good" attendance will only improve "if the teachers and attendance personnel . . . see the importance of keeping **accurate attendance records.**" Numerous people mentioned "putting records on computer and have someone who knows what they are doing." Such a system could be composed of "a computer network (in each classroom) with the central computer located in the office at the attendance clerk's desk. All that the teacher would have to do is punch a button to see if a student checked out or is laying out. Too, the teacher could easily report a student who is not in their class." Others recommended improvement in the current hand-carried attendance tracking system.

10. What motivates you to be your best on the job?
What more could we do to recognize and reward faculty success?

Three major motivators clearly emerged from the data. Twice as many people were motivated by seeing student achievement as were motivated by moral standards, and this latter group was, in turn, twice as large as those reporting being motivated by rewards and acknowledgment. Therefore, four times as many people were motivated by student success as were motivated by receiving personal recognition for a job well done.

"Caring about **students,** [seeing] that they **achieve** something, make something of their selves" was the most frequent type of response given. "Knowing that someone needs me and that I can make a difference in the life of a child" was important. Working in a school provided some with the chance to "teach my students skills they will not have the opportunity to learn elsewhere." As in the answers to a previous question, numerous teachers stated that "my major motivational factor is when I finally get through to a student. Being able to accomplish something with one or two of them makes me want to do even more." "I love to see students get involved and excited about learning, nothing pleases me more than to see students feel like they have succeeded or accomplished something in my class." And another person added "I don't know how I could be rewarded more than I am already through the success of my students."

A significant number of respondents found that "my **motivation comes from within**." Many traced this attitude of "self-discipline [and] self-motivation" back to "parents who always told us to give an honest effort in the things we undertook." Others felt an ongoing responsibility for excellence "because God requires it. My Mom and Dad instilled in me God-fearing values. That I might do my best in what ever job I undertake." On an ongoing basis, "the good feeling that I get from doing a job well motivates me." This may be reflected in one's "reputation. I take pride in what others think of me." Another added that "I am a teacher by vocation. I always strive for the best, even though time plays a big roll [sic] on this! I can not always accomplish what I plan to do, but I have not regrets about trying."

Another group said that first and foremost, "positive reinforcement" and **recognition** were motivating. "I like to be verbally told that I am doing a good job." "Praise" can come from many sources, as is reflected in the comment that the respondent is motivated when she/he is "feeling as if what I do is appreciated by students as well as colleagues."

Those who mentioned the "Apple-a-Day" program were divided as to its utility and impact. "In rewarding faculty success - a simple 'good job' or even an 'apple-a-day' pin would be great" stated one person. But, "what [ever] happened to the Apple A Day award for every day?" asked another. One self-motivated respondent scoffed at the value of the program with "Apples! Ha! Ha!" "Faculty are not being reward[ed] for their success," added another, "the apples are only given to a few select people." Another person added, "Silly apples do not reward teachers; kind words and an attitude of teamwork would."

Whatever their main sources of motivation, most respondents stated that "when I feel my work is **appreciated** by students or peers, I work harder." This sends a clear message about what is important to do to further recognize and reward faculty success. "Tell people they are doing a good job" and "I like to know what I do well - it encourages me" added others. Acknowledgment can come from many sources, and may be especially appreciated when it comes from students. As one person wrote "when students get awards, a simple 'thank you, to [name]' would be nice." And someone else wrote that "occasionally a student will say 'Thanks' - and it make[s] everything worthwhile - to feel that you have touched someone's life." Sharing the good news of faculty success through the "newspaper, school paper, announcements, newsletters, features, [and] publications" also could make a difference.

Recognizing **everyone** was mentioned as an issue; "look at each individual teacher. Everyone has had success in something in the classroom." And another commented that "to reward faculty success I think you should look at what teachers do for the learning environment, rather than always reward[ing] teachers who participate in non-academic tasks."

Other **"awards or rewards to faculty"** that were mentioned by several people include "an awards banquet at the end of the year recognizing teacher success" and a "teacher of the month" or week program. Some people were motivated by receiving perks such as using "new technology which is exciting" or "being able to work with good students." In addition, a respondent (who was not at all alone) confessed that "it sounds materialistic, but money talks for extra work - such as clubs and after school work."

But for others, **internal and private recognition** of their efforts remain paramount."I think that making sure that all faculty are doing their jobs equally and preparing our students in a professional manner would provide sufficient incentives for all." A person who found internal motivation wrote, "I think that it has to be a personal thing. A person does a good job and is successful because he/she wants to be and is willing to do whatever it takes. The recognition or reward is secondary." Finally, a few respondents agreed with the statement of one person that " I do not require any recognition or reward. I want my students to recognize that I am teaching for them. It doesn't matter whether it is now or when they are older. I teach because I love it."

EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS SURVEY

ITEMS OF GREATEST CONCERN

Comparison of Staff, Parent, and Student Concerns

CATEGORY	% STATEMENTS THAT ELICITED ≥ 25% NEGATIVE RESPONSE	%NEGATIVE RESPONSE TO COMBINED CATEGORY
STAFF **Sixty-two staff members responded to a 151-item questionnaire.**		
INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP	27 out of 31 items (87 %)	37.6 %
SAFE, ORDERLY ENVIRONMENT	21 out of 25 items (84 %)	47.2 %
HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONS	17 out of 22 items (77 %)	42.7 %
HIGH EXPECTATIONS	11 out of 24 items (46 %)	26.7 %
OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN/ TIME ON TASK	7 out of 20 items (35 %)	26.1 %
CLEAR SCHOOL MISSION	3 out of 20 items (15 %)	16.1 %
FREQUENT MONITORING	1 out of 9 items (11 %)	13.6 %
PARENTS **Four hundred forty-one parents responded to a 112-item questionnaire.**		
SAFE, ORDERLY ENVIRONMENT	17 out of 26 items (65 %)	30.5 %
FREQUENT MONITORING	5 out of 9 items (56 %)	32.3 %
HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONS	10 out of 19 items (53 %)	33.9 %
INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP	6 out of 16 items (38 %)	26.5 %
HIGH EXPECTATIONS	6 out of 17 items (35 %)	21.8 %
OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN/ TIME ON TASK	5 out of 17 items (29 %)	21.9 %
CLEAR SCHOOL MISSION	2 out of 8 items (25 %)	25.7 %
STUDENTS **Eight hundred twenty-nine students responded to a 60-item questionnaire. Only three categories contained more than 10 statements**		
SAFE, ORDERLY ENVIRONMENT	18 out of 21 items (86 %)	39.6 %
OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN/ TIME ON TASK	10 out of 12 items (83 %)	32.3 %
HIGH EXPECTATIONS	11 out of 18 items (61 %)	28.8 %

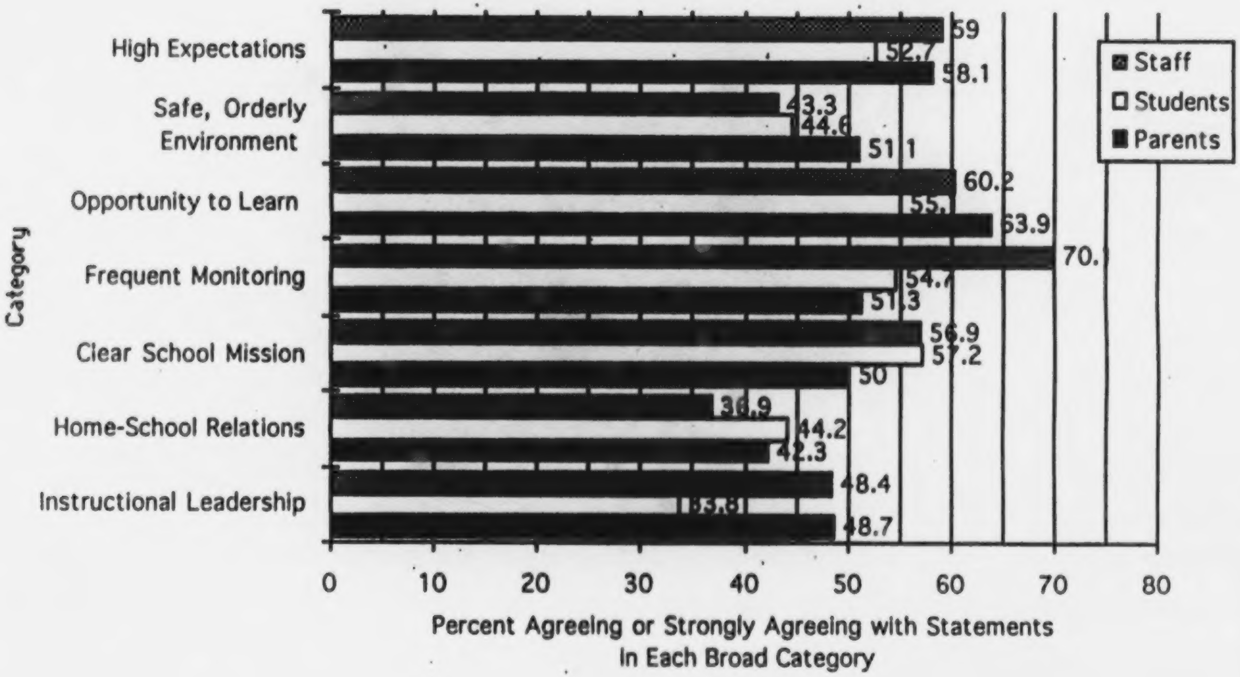
INTERPRETATION NOTES

The questionnaires given to each group were of differing lengths and contained different questions, both of which lessen the exact comparisons that can be accurately made.

The "Percent statements that elicited a 25 % or greater negative response" shows **how prevalent concerns were** about items within this category. For example, students disagreed or strongly disagreed with 18 out of 21, or 86% of, statements of elements needed for a "safe, orderly environment." Staff disagreed or strongly disagreed with 84% of the statements that they were presented with, and parents disagreed or strongly disagreed with 65%.

It is not enough to know if a significant portion (here, ≥ 25% of respondents) disagreed with a statement. The "Percent negative response to the combined category" shows the **degree of concern** about items within the category, as averaged across the entire question category. For example, looking at staff responses, a greater percentage of the "instructional leadership" statements got negative marks than those under safe, orderly environment. However, under "safe, orderly environment," averaged across all measures in the category, the proportion of respondents who felt that the school earned low marks was higher. Forty-seven point two percent of staff disagreed or strongly disagreed, whereas under the "instructional leadership" category, items earned only a mean 37.6 % negative response.

Results from the Effective Schools Survey



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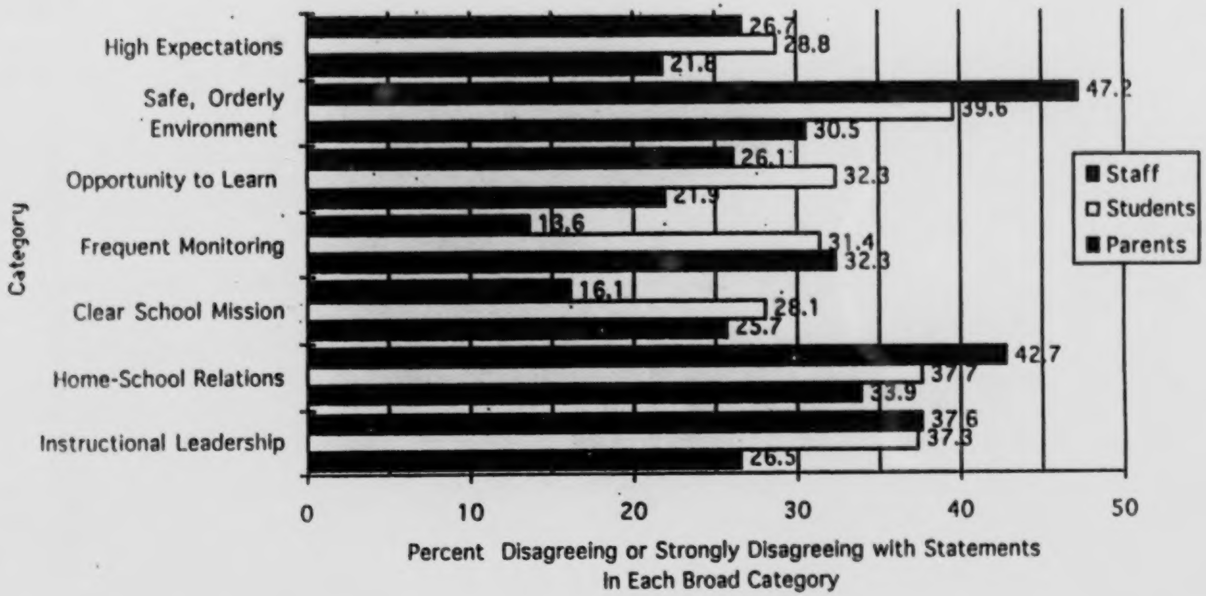
Results from the Effective Schools Survey



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EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS SURVEY

ITEMS OF GREATEST CONCERN

- Staff Responses -

Overall, 25% or more of staff members responded "disagree" or "strongly disagree" to 87 out of 151 statements, or 57.6% of all items. In other words, over half of the items deemed necessary for an effective school were identified by at least one out of four staff members as not being present at Hickory County Central. On some items, nearly three-quarters of staff members felt that this aspect was missing at this school.

Categories are listed from the greatest to least degree of concern. Only those statements that generated a 25% or greater negative response, i.e. "disagree" or "strongly disagree," are listed. The first column is the percentage of respondents who gave the two most negative responses. The statements are likewise listed under the categories from greatest to least degree of concern. The number in parenthesis is the survey question number.

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

27 out of 31 items (87%) were ≥25% negative. Only 3 were ≥ 50% negative. As a combined category, 37.6% of respondents answered "disagree" or "strongly disagree."

74	(3.) The administrators regularly give feedback to teachers regarding their instructional techniques.
55	(43.) Instructional leadership from the administrators is clear, strong, and centralized in this school.
55	(143.) Instructional issues are frequently the focus of faculty meetings.
48	(112.) The administrators are highly visible throughout the school.
48	(128.)The administrators make several formal classroom observations each year.
47	(20.) In general, administrative leadership is effective in resolving problems concerning the educational program at this school.
45	(57.) In this school, the staff development program is evaluated based on evidence of use in the classroom.
45	(126.) The administrators seek ideas and suggestions from the staff.
44	(2.) The administrators make frequent informal contact with students and teachers.

42 (123.) The administrators initiate effective coordination of the instructional program.

40 (23.) Administrative leadership is available to resolve disagreements that develop among staff members.

40 (132.) The administrators and faculty can solve most problems facing this school.

39 (140.) Follow-up assistance (materials, coaching, etc.) is provided by the administration for implementing skills learned in staff development activities.

39 (27.) The administrators review and interpret test results with the faculty.

39 (45.) After the formal classroom observation, the teacher and administrators develop a plan for instructional improvement.

39 (59.) The staff development program is regularly evaluated by the staff.

37 (93.) The administrators emphasize the meaning of standardized test results.

34 (111.) Before a formal observation, the principal and teacher discuss what the administrators will observe.

34 (138.) The administrators initiate the use of test results to modify or change the instructional program.

34 (122.) The administrators and staff plan the staff development program.

33 (11.) The administrators emphasize participation by teachers in staff development activities related to instructional improvement.

32 (34.) The administrators are accessible to discuss matters dealing with instruction.

32 (47.) A primary focus of staff development activities at our school is the acquisition of new skills.

31 (42.) A primary focus of staff development activities at our school is the application of knowledge and skills in the classroom.

31 (139.) Classroom observations conducted by the administrators are focused on improving instruction.

29 (83.) The administrators are active in promoting staff development activities.

27 (37.) The administrators encourage teachers to accept their responsibilities for student achievement.

SAFE, ORDERLY ENVIRONMENT

21 out of 25 items (84%) were $\geq$25% negative. Eleven were $\geq$ 50% negative. As a combined category, 47.2% of respondents answered "disagree" or "strongly disagree."

77 (150.) Students treat each other respectfully and are not subject to verbal abuse by other students.

76 (58.) Vandalism or destruction of school property by students is not a problem.

71 (114.) Few discipline problems are referred to the office.

66 (29.) Teachers, administrators, parents, and students share responsibility for maintaining discipline in this school.

66 (36.) Staff members are treated respectfully by students and not subject to verbal abuse.

65 (39.) Students and staff members take pride in the school and help keep the buildings and grounds clean and attractive.

65 (22.) There is a positive school spirit.

61 (52.) Administrators enforce the student rules consistently and equitably.

58 (71.) Most students in this school are eager and enthusiastic about learning.

52 (4.) Property of students is secure.

52 (100.) Property of staff members is secure.

48 (66.) In general, requests for repairs or alterations to facilities are responded to in a reasonable amount of time.

47 (30.) Students are frequently rewarded or praised by faculty and staff for following school rules.

46 (94.) Staff members enforce the student rules consistently and equitably.

45 (109.) Students are held accountable for maintaining school rules throughout the year.

44 (33.) Administrators support teachers in dealing with student discipline matters.

40 (32.) The school buildings are kept in good repair.

40 (9.) Students generally believe that school rules are reasonable and appropriate.

34 (110.) Students are taught the school rules.

31 (81.) The physical condition of this school building is generally pleasant and well-kept.

26 (72.) This school is a safe and secure place to work during the normal school day.

HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONS

17 out of 22 items (77%) were ≥25% negative. Ten were ≥ 50% negative. As a combined category, 42.7 % of respondents answered "disagree" or "strongly disagree."

82 (134.) Seventy-five percent or more of the parents attend open house or back-to-school night.

65 (46.) Almost all students complete assigned homework before coming to school.

65 (105.) Parents frequently initiate contact with the classroom teachers.

61 (51.) Students' homework is monitored at home.

60 (117.) Most parents rate this school superior.

58 (21.) Teachers in this school spend more time communicating with parents about the good things students do than about the bad.

53 (67.) Cooperation exists between parents and teachers in regard to homework monitoring.

52 (74.) Most parents are aware of the instructional objectives at each grade level and in each subject area.

50 (120.) Parents and/or community members are frequently volunteers in this school.

50 (79.) Most parents have a clear understanding of the school's goals.

45 (113.) Teachers contact parents in this school on a regular basis.

42 (65.) Most parents support school personnel when their child is disciplined for violation of rules.

39 (127.) The parent organization at this school is considered important by the administration.

39 (119.) In this school, parents are aware of the discipline policy.

34 (136.) Teachers at this school invite parents to observe the instructional program.

31 (16.) Phone calls, newsletters, regular notes, and conferences are ways that most teachers communicate with parents in this school.

27 (107.) The parent organization at this school is considered important by the teaching staff.

HIGH EXPECTATIONS

11 out of 24 items (46%) were ≥25% negative. Only 1 was ≥ 50% negative.
As a combined category, 26.7% of respondents answered "disagree" or "strongly disagree."

71 (101.) Teachers expect that over 95% of students in this school will graduate from high school.

44 (99.) Students not achieving identified standards are given additional help until standards are achieved.

44 (7.) In general, teachers expect almost all of their students to do well on norm-referenced (standardized) tests.

39 (1.) Many students are acknowledged and rewarded for academic improvement and achievement in this school.

38 (86.) Students in this school try to succeed in their classes.

37 (98.) in this school, over 90% of the students are expected to achieve identified standards.

35 (28.) In this school, students who academically achieve are respected by their peers.

31 (25.) In spite of my students' home background, I feel that I can teach so that 90-95% are successful in my class.

31 (129.) In this school, students are assigned academic classes according to ability.

27 (18.) Teachers in this school believe that all students can achieve the valued outcomes related to writing. ??? about math

25 (147.) Students' achievement in academically related areas (speech, drama, art, etc.) are formally recognized by students and staff.

OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN/ TIME ON TASK

7 out of 20 items (35%) were ≥25% negative. Only 3 were ≥ 50% negative.
As a combined category, 26.1% of respondents answered "disagree" or "strongly disagree."

61 (50.) Most students come to class with all the materials they need (e.g. books, paper, pencils).

57 (6.) There is a schoolwide written homework policy.

51 (8.) Class is rarely interrupted to discipline students.

47 (15.) Classroom instruction is generally free from interruptions from the office (e.g. messages, P.A. announcements, requests for students from the office).

47 (56.) Teachers and the principal thoroughly review and analyze test results to plan instructional program modifications.

39 (92.) Classroom instruction is generally free from interruption from outside maintenance (mowing the lawn, repairs, etc.).

31 (90.) Students must master the essential academic skills being taught before proceeding to the next learning level.

CLEAR SCHOOL MISSION

3 out of 20 items (15%) were ≥25% negative. None were ≥ 50% negative.
As a combined category, 16.1% of respondents answered "disagree" or "strongly disagree."

44 (102.) Teachers in this school have materials, supplies, and equipment that are needed to carry out this school's instructional objectives.

34% (17.) The curriculum, instruction, and assessment are aligned with school objectives.

26 (131.) Valued outcomes are the focal point of instruction in this school.

FREQUENT MONITORING

1 out of 9 items (11%) were ≥25% negative. None were ≥ 50% negative.
As a combined category, 13.6% of respondents answered "disagree" or "strongly disagree."

26 (96.) KIRIS provides an accurate and valid measure of the students' ability to achieve valued outcomes.

EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS SURVEY

ITEMS OF GREATEST CONCERN

- Parent Responses -

Overall, 25% or more of parents responded "disagree" or "strongly disagree" to 51 out of 112 statements, or 45.5% of all items. In other words, nearly half of the items deemed necessary for an effective school were identified by at least one out of four parents as not being present at Hickory Central.

Categories are listed from the greatest to least degree of concern. Only those statements that elicited a 25% or greater negative response, i.e. "disagree" or "strongly disagree," are listed. The first column is the percentage of respondents who chose the two most negative responses. The statements are likewise listed under the categories from greatest to least degree of concern. The number in parenthesis is the survey question number.

SAFE, ORDERLY ENVIRONMENT

17 out of 26 items (65%) were ≥25% negative. Only 4 were ≥ 50% negative. As a combined category, 30.5% of respondents answered "disagree" or "strongly disagree."

57 (4.) My child's property is safe at this school.

54 (91.) My child is generally safe from insults and verbal abuse from other students at school.

52 (31.) There are few fights or problems at this school between groups of students.

52 (52.) Student misbehavior does not seem to be a major problem at my child's school.

45 (78.) I am confident that my child is safe when at school.

43 (103.) My child feels safe at school.

40 (6.) To the best of my knowledge, students take pride in this school and help to keep the buildings and grounds clean and attractive.

40 (100.) My child is praised or rewarded by teachers for following school rules.

36 (60.) School rules are enforced consistently and fairly at this school.

32 (8.) Teachers, parents, and administrators share responsibility for maintaining discipline in this school.

31 (75.) School buildings are generally bright, clean, and kept in good repair.

28 (49.) My child enjoys school.

28 (63.) There is a positive school spirit at this school.

26 (11.) I am proud to say my child attends this school.

26 (37.) As a new student, my child was generally made to feel welcome at this school.

25 (20.) My child feels free to participate in extracurricular activities (sports, clubs, academic competitions, etc.).

FREQUENT MONITORING

5 out of 9 items (56%) were ≥25% negative. Only 2 were ≥ 50% negative.
As a combined category, 32.3% of respondents answered "disagree" or "strongly disagree."

70 (24.) My child's teachers contact me to discuss my child's progress.

53 (84.) I am informed about how well my child does on tests.

40 (15.) I am frequently kept informed about my child's academic progress.

31 (67.) The teacher makes comments on my child's homework and gives suggestions for improvement.

25 (97.) The teacher explains to my child how he/she is doing.

HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONS

10 out of 19 items (53%) were ≥25% negative. Only 6 were ≥ 50% negative.
As a combined category, 33.9 % of respondents answered "disagree" or "strongly disagree."

62 (45.) My child's teacher keeps me informed through phone calls, class newsletters, and/or notes home.

59 (72.) I have been invited to visit and observe my child's classroom.

58 (62.) I participate in this school's parent group.

56 (101.) I would rate this school superior.

53 (19.) I attend open house or back-to-school night.

52 (41.) I attend parent-teacher conferences.

44 (35.) My child's teachers spend more time communicating with me about the good things my child does than the bad.

37 (29.) I attend school activities, such as sports events, plays, concerts, awards assemblies.

32 (86.) Parents are encouraged to share ideas for school improvement with administration and staff in this school.

25 (55.) Parent/teacher conferences usually result in a specific plan of how I can help my child.

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

6 out of 16 items (38%) were ≥25% negative. Only 1 was ≥ 50% negative.
As a combined category, 26.5% of respondents answered "disagree" or "strongly disagree."

52 (18.) The principal and/or teacher explains the meaning and use of standardized test results to parents.

48 (104.) The principal keeps parents well informed about the academic program.

37 (3.) Parents, students, teachers and principal work together to solve problems in this school.

35 (21.) The principal uses the school newsletter to report on the academic progress of the student body.

29 (34.) I am pleased with the leadership provided by the school principal.

26 (25.) The principal frequently discusses the school's purpose and goals at parent meetings and in the school newsletter.

HIGH EXPECTATIONS

6 out of 17 items (35%) were ≥25% negative. None were ≥ 50% negative.
As a combined category, 21.8% of respondents answered "disagree" or "strongly disagree."

33 (26.) To the best of my knowledge, teachers at this school have the same level of expectations of academic achievement for all students.

32 (23.) Teachers at this school expect that all students will graduate from high school.

30 (1.) I am satisfied with my child's progress in school.

30 (28.) To the best of my knowledge, students who academically achieve are respected by other students in this school.

27 (33.) My child is recognized for academic achievements.

26 (102.) Student achievement in academically related areas (speech, drama, art, etc.) are publicly recognized.

OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN/ TIME ON TASK

5 out of 17 items (29%) were ≥25% negative. None were ≥ 50% negative.
As a combined category, 21.9% of respondents answered "disagree" or "strongly disagree."

42 (47.) I contact my child's teacher if he/she frequently has difficulties with homework.

34 (69.) Teachers and staff seem to take a real interest in my child's future.

32 (48.) My child has learned good study habits.

29 (53.) My child is given homework on most school days.

25 (96.) I feel my child is learning skills and knowledge he/she need to know to prepare him/her for the future.

CLEAR SCHOOL MISSION

2 out of 8 items (25%) were ≥25% negative. Only 1 was ≥ 50% negative.
As a combined category, 25.7% of respondents answered "disagree" or "strongly disagree."

64 (111.) My child's teacher has informed me about what my child is to learn in each subject area.

39 (88.) The overall purpose, direction, and priorities of the school have been made clear to me.

EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS SURVEY

ITEMS OF GREATEST CONCERN

- Student Responses -

Overall, 25% or more of students responded "disagree" or "strongly disagree" to 46 out of 60 statements, or 76.6 % of all items. Only three categories had more than 10 statements. Nevertheless, categories are listed as before.

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

3 out of 3 items (100%) were ≥25% negative. None were ≥ 50% negative.
As a combined category, 37.3% of respondents answered "disagree" or "strongly disagree."

44 (26.) The administration of the school listens to students and their concerns.

34 (20.) The principal really cares about students.

34 (11.) The administration of the school is responsive to students' needs.

FREQUENT MONITORING

2 out of 2 items (100%) were ≥25% negative. None were ≥ 50% negative.
As a combined category, 31.4% of respondents answered "disagree" or "strongly disagree."

36 (45.) I feel satisfied with my progress in school.

27 (37.) I am given comments on my assignments and suggestions for improvement.

HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONS

1 out of 1 item (100%) were ≥25% negative. None were ≥ 50% negative.
As a combined category, 37.7 % of respondents answered "disagree" or "strongly disagree."

38 (3.) My parents are informed about the good things I do at school.

SAFE, ORDERLY ENVIRONMENT

18 out of 21 items (86%) were ≥25% negative. Only 4 were ≥ 50% negative.
As a combined category, 39.6% of respondents answered "disagree" or "strongly disagree."

67 (36.) Students treat each other with respect in this school.

58 (4.) Most students treat teachers with respect in this school.

56 (39.) Most students in my school obey school rules.

52 (55.) This school makes students enthusiastic about learning.

48 (53.) I feel safe in this school.

46 (6.) Classroom rules are enforced equally.

45 (34.) School rules are enforced consistently and fairly.

44 (18.) I enjoy coming to school.

44 (47.) My school buildings are generally pleasant and well-maintained.

43 (16.) The rules of the school are fair.

42 (56.) It is easy to talk with teachers.

39 (10.) Teachers treat students with respect.

39 (30.) I can count on teachers and staff members to listen to my side of the story.

35 (33.) I am satisfied with the variety of after school extracurricular activities at this school.

34 (15.) Teachers know and treat students as individuals.

32 (49.) There is a positive school spirit.

32 (51.) If I have a school problem, I feel there are people in the school who can and will help.

30 (1.) My teachers try to solve discipline problems first before sending students to the principal/vice principal.

OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN / TIME ON TASK

10 out of 12 items (83%) were ≥25% negative. None were ≥ 50% negative.
As a combined category, 32.3% of respondents answered "disagree" or "strongly disagree."

49 (23.) Classroom instruction is generally free from interruption from the office (messages, P.A. announcements, requests for students, etc.)

44 (40.) If this school had a seven period day, I would take an additional academic class.

35 (2.) I have a regular place and time to work on my homework.

33 (25.) I spend most of my class time working by myself on written class assignments.

33 (31.) Class starts promptly at the beginning of each period.

32 (54.) Teachers are available when I need to talk with them.

32 (38.) My homework assignments help me do better in class.

30 (27.) Discipline is a problem in this school.

28 (32.) I usually get my homework done on time.

26 (17.) Homework is regularly assigned in my academic classes (English, math, history, science).

HIGH EXPECTATIONS

11 out of 18 items (61%) were ≥25% negative. Only 1 was ≥ 50% negative.
As a combined category, 28.8% of respondents answered "disagree" or "strongly disagree."

60 (59.) Students are frequently rewarded or praised by faculty and staff for following school rules

45 (21.) In this school, students who get high grades are respected by other students.

45 (41.) When I do well, my teachers praise me.

39 (9.) Teachers and staff seem to take a real interest in my future.

35 (5.) In this school, students are assigned academic classes according to ability.

35 (19.) Many students are publicly recognized and rewarded for improvements and achievements in their classes.

30 (13.) On a rating scale from A to E, how would you rate this school? [corresponded to SA. . . SD]

30 (52.) I am encouraged to question and discuss the subject matter in my classroom.

28 (48.) In my classes I am learning the things that I need to know to prepare me for the future.

26 (24.) Students are publicly recognized for their outstanding performances in speech, drama, art, music, etc.

25 (8.) Teachers in all subject areas require students to do reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

CLEAR SCHOOL MISSION

1 out of 3 items (33%) were ≥25% negative. None were ≥ 50% negative.
As a combined category, 28.1 % of respondents answered "disagree" or "strongly disagree."

44 (14.) Problems in this school are solved by students and staff.

❋❋❋ FACULTY SURVEY II ❋❋❋

Please circle the number that best describes how much you agree with each statement. (NOTE: If you feel that things have changed significantly in the recent past and therefore cannot circle one single number, *circle* the number that corresponds to how things are now, and *underline* the number for how things were in the past.)

1 - I do not agree at all!
2 - I only agree a little
3 - I agree some of the time
4 - I agree most of the time
5 - I definitely agree!

---

1. 1 2 3 4 5 The Board and Superintendent have done things for the good of children, not for their own benefit.
2. 1 2 3 4 5 Women are respected as public leaders in this county.
3. 1 2 3 4 5 Local people can make the best decisions about how to run our school, not the state officials.
4. 1 2 3 4 5 Experts should make most decisions about how to run the schools.
5. 1 2 3 4 5 If you vote for someone, you can't complain about what they do when elected.
6. 1 2 3 4 5 I trust the principals to make the best decisions that will be for the good of the children in this county.
7. 1 2 3 4 5 If a teacher says that a child had done something wrong, the parents would stand up for the child first and foremost, not the teacher.
8. 1 2 3 4 5 If my child got in trouble at school, he/she would get in trouble at home too.
9. 1 2 3 4 5 All children are treated equally in our schools, no matter who their parents are or how much money they have.
10. 1 2 3 4 5 Teachers and principals want elementary school parents to be involved.
11. 1 2 3 4 5 Teachers and principals want high school parents to be involved.
12. 1 2 3 4 5 Most elementary school parents want to be involved in their child's education and in school activities.
13. 1 2 3 4 5 Most high school parents want to be involved in child's education and in school activities.
14. 1 2 3 4 5 If enough people want to change something in the schools, we can do it.

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15. 1 2 3 4 5 **Ordinary people used to have more roles and be more important when we had small schools.**
16. 1 2 3 4 5 Site-based councils have given more and different people the chance to have a significant influence on decisions.
17. 1 2 3 4 5 If I have a concern, I feel comfortable going to talk to a principal or another teacher about it.
18. 1 2 3 4 5 People should leave it to the school personnel to set school policies and programs.

19. 1 2 3 4 5 All children can achieve at high levels.
20. 1 2 3 4 5 The public schools are too liberal.
21. 1 2 3 4 5 I am satisfied with the achievement levels of our schools in this county.
22. 1 2 3 4 5 If a young woman gets married, she should stay in high school.
23. 1 2 3 4 5 I hope that my children will have more education that I do.
24. 1 2 3 4 5 All young people should finish high school.
25. 1 2 3 4 5 Our schools are good enough for us.
26. 1 2 3 4 5 If a young man gets married, he should quit high school.
27. 1 2 3 4 5 Getting an education is more important today than it was twenty years ago.
28. 1 2 3 4 5 Better schools will help bring jobs to this area.
29. 1 2 3 4 5 The kind of person you are is more important than what diploma or degree you have.
30. 1 2 3 4 5 If a young woman becomes a parent she should quit high school.
31. 1 2 3 4 5 Having a good education can help you overcome having the wrong family name or being from the wrong place.
32. 1 2 3 4 5 Most young people can finish high school.
33. 1 2 3 4 5 If a young man becomes a parent he should stay in high school.
34. 1 2 3 4 5 Everyone needs to continue learning through out their life.

35. 1 2 3 4 5 People from our county should always be hired over outsiders.
36. 1 2 3 4 5 Through KERA we have received needed help from outsiders.
37. 1 2 3 4 5 If two people are equally qualified, the one from this county should be hired over the outsider.
38. 1 2 3 4 5 We should only make changes if they can fit our situation here, whether they are required or not.
39. 1 2 3 4 5 If you want to get a job here you have to have the right political connections.
40. 1 2 3 4 5 KERA has brought too much interference by outsiders.

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41. 1 2 3 4 5 Everyday people have enough opportunity to set our own priorities regarding the schools.

42. 1 2 3 4 5 We should adopt required changes so that we can be in the forefront of change.

43. 1 2 3 4 5 If changes worked somewhere else, they will probably work here too.

44. 1 2 3 4 5 If you want to have a good job you have to leave this county.

45. 1 2 3 4 5 In this area, if a person wants to work he or she can find a job.

46. 1 2 3 4 5 In order to get the best jobs you have to have the right name, be from the right place, or have the right connections.

47. 1 2 3 4 5 Welfare causes a poor attitude about the importance of getting an education.

48. 1 2 3 4 5 People in Hickory county are as smart as people elsewhere.

49. 1 2 3 4 5 If a young person has ambition he or she should leave this county.

50. 1 2 3 4 5 It is an important thing to have a personal connection of some kind before you hire a person.

51. 1 2 3 4 5 Its harder to get a job if you have the "wrong" family name or come from the wrong place.

52. 1 2 3 4 5 I would rather stay in this county, even if it means less money or a job that I don't like as much.

53. 1 2 3 4 5 Most people on welfare want to work.

54. 1 2 3 4 5 I feel that other school personnel will look down on me because of who I am.

55. 1 2 3 4 5 I prefer that my children live in this county (or close by) when they grow up.

56. 1 2 3 4 5 Certain families control the best jobs in this county.

THANKS SO MUCH for your ongoing input. As always, the results will be available to anyone *here* who wants them.

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*** PARENT ATTITUDE SURVEY ***

NOTE: The spacing on this survey has also been condensed for this bound format.

Sex (circle): Male Female Age________

My high school(s) was/were:________________________________

Highest level of education you completed:________________________

Profession/vocation________________________________

Your teen #1

Age________ Sex:________ GPA________

Extracurricular activities________________________________

Your teen #2

Age________ Sex:________ GPA________

Extracurricular activities________________________________

List the five things that you like best about living here.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Like the five things that you like least about living here.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

The greatest problem facing people and their schools in this county is:
Please circle the number that best describes how much you agree with each statement.

1 - I do not agree at all!
2 - I only agree a little
3 - I agree some of the time
4 - I agree most of the time
5 - I definitely agree!

---

1 2 3 4 5 The Board and Superintendent have done things for the good of children, not for their own benefit.

1 2 3 4 5 Women are respected as public leaders in this county.

1 2 3 4 5 Local people can make the best decisions about how to run our school, not the state officials.

1 2 3 4 5 Experts should make most decisions about how to run the schools.

1 2 3 4 5 If you vote for someone, you can't complain about what they do when elected.

1 2 3 4 5 I trust the principals to make the best decisions that will be for the good of the children in this county.

1 2 3 4 5 If a teacher had said that my child had done something wrong, I would stand up for my child first and foremost, not the teacher.

1 2 3 4 5 If my child got in trouble at school, he/she would get in trouble at home too.

What is hindering parent participation at Hickory Central?

Who can or should do something about this?

What have the responses been to your efforts to communicate with teachers and administration?

Please circle the number that best describes how much you agree with each statement.
1 - I do not agree at all!
2 - I only agree a little
3 - I agree some of the time
4 - I agree most of the time
5 - I definitely agree!

1	2	3	4	5	All children are treated equally in our schools, no matter who their parents are or how much money they have.
1	2	3	4	5	Teachers and principals want elementary school parents to be involved.
1	2	3	4	5	Teachers and principals want high school parents to be involved.
1	2	3	4	5	Most elementary school parents want to be involved in their child's education and in school activities.
1	2	3	4	5	Most high school parents want to be involved in child's education and in school activities.
1	2	3	4	5	If enough people want to change something in the schools, we can do it.
1	2	3	4	5	Ordinary people used to have more roles and be more important when we had small schools.
1	2	3	4	5	Site-based councils have given more and different people the chance to have a significant influence on decisions.
1	2	3	4	5	If I have a concern, I feel comfortable going to talk to a principal or that teacher about it.
1	2	3	4	5	We should leave it to the school personnel to set school policies and programs.

Give an example of specific time that you felt welcome at HCHS.

Give an example of a specific time that you felt listened to and/or valued at HCHS.

Give an example of a specific time that you felt like you were intruding/unwelcome at HCHS.

What are the most personally rewarding things to you about your involvement with HCHS?

Please circle the number that best describes how much you agree with each statement.
1 - I do not agree at all!
2 - I only agree a little
3 - I agree some of the time
4 - I agree most of the time
5 - I definitely agree!

1	2	3	4	5	All children can achieve at high levels.
1	2	3	4	5	The public schools are too liberal.
1	2	3	4	5	I am satisfied with the achievement levels of our schools in this county.
1	2	3	4	5	If a young woman gets married, she should stay in high school.
1	2	3	4	5	I hope that my children will have more education that I do.
1	2	3	4	5	All young people should finish high school.
1	2	3	4	5	Our schools are good enough for us.
1	2	3	4	5	If a young man gets married, he should quit high school.
1	2	3	4	5	Getting an education is more important today than it was twenty years ago.
1	2	3	4	5	Better schools will help bring jobs to this area.
1	2	3	4	5	The kind of person you are is more important than what diploma or degree you have.
1	2	3	4	5	If a young woman becomes a parent she should quit high school.
1	2	3	4	5	Having a good education can help you overcome having the wrong family name or being from the wrong holler.
1	2	3	4	5	Most young people can finish high school.
1	2	3	4	5	If a young man becomes a parent he should stay in high school.
1	2	3	4	5	Everyone needs to continue learning through out their life.

How might your experience working with the school be different if you were of the other sex?

How might your experience working with the school be different if you were a parent who had not completed high school?

What opportunities and/or relationships does the PTA offer you that you do not have otherwise? Think about the other groups that are you involved in that do similar things- how is PTA the same and different.

What events does the PTA traditionally sponsor each year?

On the list above, place a star next to the items that you think would be most missed if they did not happen. Why would they be missed?

Please circle the number that best describes how much you agree with each statement.

1 - I do not agree at all!
2 - I only agree a little
3 - I agree some of the time
4 - I agree most of the time
5 - I definitely agree!

1	2	3	4	5	People from our county should always be hired over outsiders.
1	2	3	4	5	Through KERA we have received needed help from outsiders.
1	2	3	4	5	If two people are equally qualified, the one from this county should be hired over the outsider.
1	2	3	4	5	We should only make changes if they can fit our situation here, whether they are required or not.
1	2	3	4	5	If you want to get a job here you have to have the right political connections.
1	2	3	4	5	KERA has brought too much interference by outsiders.
1	2	3	4	5	Everyday people have enough opportunity to set our own priorities regarding the schools.
1	2	3	4	5	We should adopt required changes so that we can be in the forefront of change.
1	2	3	4	5	If changes worked somewhere else, they will probably work here too.

When you first child was making the transition to high school, what did you wish that you know more about?

How are parent members of the site-based council selected?

Where do you most frequently meet up with HCHS teachers and administrators outside of school (e.g. at church, grocery store, parks, child care, sporting events)?

Your child does not like to get up and go to school. Some parents might say "I just can't get her/him to go." What is your response?

Sometimes teens do not want their parents to be involved at school. Give examples of time when you felt this was the case for your family. What did you do?

Please circle the number that best describes how much you agree with each statement.
1 - I do not agree at all!
2 - I only agree a little
3 - I agree some of the time
4 - I agree most of the time
5 - I definitely agree!

1	2	3	4	5	If you want to have a good job you have to leave this county.
1	2	3	4	5	In this area, if a person wants to work he or she can find a job.
1	2	3	4	5	In order to get the best jobs you have to have the right name, be from the right place, or have the right connections.
1	2	3	4	5	Welfare causes a poor attitude about the importance of getting an education.
1	2	3	4	5	People in Hickory county are as smart as people elsewhere.
1	2	3	4	5	If a young person has ambition he or she should leave this county.
1	2	3	4	5	It is an important thing to have a personal connection of some kind before you hire a person.
1	2	3	4	5	Its harder to get a job if you have the "wrong" family name or come from the wrong place.
1	2	3	4	5	I would rather stay in this county, even if it means less money or a job that I don't like as much.
1	2	3	4	5	Most people on welfare want to work.
1	2	3	4	5	I feel that school personnel will look down on me because of who I am.
1	2	3	4	5	I prefer that my children live in this county (or close by) when they grow up.
1	2	3	4	5	Certain families control the best jobs in this county.

As you have time:

Dream up a PTA project. What have you always wanted the PTA to do? Who would be involved? What would you do? What would the goals be?

ADULT G.E.D. CLASS SURVEY

NOTE: The spacing on this survey has also been condensed for this bound format.

Please circle the number that best describes how much you agree with each statement. (NOTE: If you feel that things have changed significantly in the recent past and therefore cannot circle one single number, *circle* the number that corresponds to how things are now, and *underline* the number for how things were in the past.)

There is space at the end to explain any answers that you care to.

1 - I do not agree at all!
2 - I only agree a little
3 - I agree some of the time
4 - I agree most of the time
5 - I definitely agree!

---

1. 1 2 3 4 5 The Board and Superintendent have done things for the good of children, not for their own benefit.
2. 1 2 3 4 5 Women are respected as public leaders in this county.
3. 1 2 3 4 5 Local people can make the best decisions about how to run our school, not the state officials.
4. 1 2 3 4 5 Experts should make most decisions about how to run the schools.
5. 1 2 3 4 5 If you vote for someone, you can't complain about what they do when elected.
6. 1 2 3 4 5 I trust the principals to make the best decisions that will be for the good of the children in this county.
7. 1 2 3 4 5 If a teacher says that a child had done something wrong, the parents would stand up for the child first and foremost, not the teacher.
8. 1 2 3 4 5 If my child got in trouble at school, he/she would get in trouble at home too.

9. 1 2 3 4 5 All children are treated equally in our schools, no matter who their parents are or how much money they have.
10. 1 2 3 4 5 Teachers and principals want elementary school parents to be involved.
11. 1 2 3 4 5 Teachers and principals want high school parents to be involved.
12. 1 2 3 4 5 Most elementary school parents want to be involved in their child's education and in school activities.
13. 1 2 3 4 5 Most high school parents want to be involved in child's education and in school activities.

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1 - I do not agree at all!
2 - I only agree a little
3 - I agree some of the time
4 - I agree most of the time
5 - I definitely agree!

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14. 1 2 3 4 5 If enough people want to change something in the schools, we can do it.
15. 1 2 3 4 5 Ordinary people used to have more roles and be more important when we had small schools.
16. 1 2 3 4 5 Site-based councils have given more and different people the chance to have a significant influence on decisions.
17. 1 2 3 4 5 If I have a concern, I feel comfortable going to talk to a principal or another teacher about it.
18. 1 2 3 4 5 People should leave it to the school personnel to set school policies and programs.

19. 1 2 3 4 5 All children can achieve at high levels.
20. 1 2 3 4 5 The public schools are too liberal.
21. 1 2 3 4 5 I am satisfied with the achievement levels of our schools in this county.
22. 1 2 3 4 5 If a young woman gets married, she should stay in high school.
23. 1 2 3 4 5 I hope that my children will have more education that I do.
24. 1 2 3 4 5 All young people should finish high school.
25. 1 2 3 4 5 Our schools are good enough for us.
26. 1 2 3 4 5 If a young man gets married, he should quit high school.
27. 1 2 3 4 5 Getting an education is more important today than it was twenty years ago.
28. 1 2 3 4 5 Better schools will help bring jobs to this area.
29. 1 2 3 4 5 The kind of person you are is more important than what diploma or degree you have.
30. 1 2 3 4 5 If a young woman becomes a parent she should quit high school.
31. 1 2 3 4 5 Having a good education can help you overcome having the wrong family name or being from the wrong place.
32. 1 2 3 4 5 Most young people can finish high school.
33. 1 2 3 4 5 If a young man becomes a parent he should stay in high school.
34. 1 2 3 4 5 Everyone needs to continue learning throughout their life.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

1 - I do not agree at all!
2 - I only agree a little
3 - I agree some of the time
4 - I agree most of the time
5 - I definitely agree!

---

35. 1 2 3 4 5 People from our county should always be hired over outsiders.

36. 1 2 3 4 5 Through KERA we have received needed help from outsiders.

37. 1 2 3 4 5 If two people are equally qualified, the one from this county should be hired over the outsider.

38. 1 2 3 4 5 We should only make changes if they can fit our situation here, whether they are required or not.

39. 1 2 3 4 5 If you want to get a job here you have to have the right political connections.

40. 1 2 3 4 5 KERA has brought too much interference by outsiders.

41. 1 2 3 4 5 Everyday people have enough opportunity to set our own priorities regarding the schools.

42. 1 2 3 4 5 We should adopt required changes so that we can be in the forefront of change.

43. 1 2 3 4 5 If changes worked somewhere else, they will probably work here too.

44. 1 2 3 4 5 If you want to have a good job you have to leave this county.

45. 1 2 3 4 5 In this area, if a person wants to work he or she can find a job.

46. 1 2 3 4 5 In order to get the best jobs you have to have the right name, be from the right place, or have the right connections.

47. 1 2 3 4 5 Welfare causes a poor attitude about the importance of getting an education.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

1 - I do not agree at all!
2 - I only agree a little
3 - I agree some of the time
4 - I agree most of the time
5 - I definitely agree!

48.	1	2	3	4	5	People in Hickory county are as smart as people elsewhere.
49.	1	2	3	4	5	If a young person has ambition he or she should leave this county.
50.	1	2	3	4	5	It is an important thing to have a personal connection of some kind before you hire a person.
51.	1	2	3	4	5	Its harder to get a job if you have the "wrong" family name or come from the wrong place.
52.	1	2	3	4	5	I would rather stay in this county, even if it means less money or a job that I don't like as much.
53.	1	2	3	4	5	Most people on welfare want to work.
54.	1	2	3	4	5	I feel that other school personnel will look down on me because of who I am.
55.	1	2	3	4	5	I prefer that my children live in this county (or close by) when they grow up.
56.	1	2	3	4	5	Certain families control the best jobs in this county.

THANKS SO MUCH.
Your answers will be used to help make this program better for you and for others.

Please use this space to explain any answers that you care to. Put the question number and then the comment.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

FIRST YEAR STUDENT SURVEY

NOTE: The spacing on this survey has also been condensed for this bound format.

You are invited to share your ideas in a research study on HCHS and the changes that are happening here. You have successfully completed your freshman year and we are sure that you have many ideas about your time here. Your name was chosen at random by a computer. **You** have the very special opportunity to give your opinions and ideas for how we could make things better for other students. The results of this survey will be used to make things better at HCHS as well as for a research project at Stanford University

These surveys are confidential. That means that your name will **not** be given out with your answers. Please answer every question. However, you do not have to answer any question that you do not wish to answer. Further, being in this research is voluntary. If you decide not to participate, it will not have a negative effect.

If you have any questions about words or anything ask any of the adults here.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to include your class in this survey!

Maureen Porter

Sex (circle): Male Female Age ________

Have you ever repeated a grade (circle)? No / Yes Which ones? ____________

Have you ever gone to another school (circle)? No / Yes

If yes, name ______________________ city ______________________, state _______

Which grades did you go there? ____________________________

I live with (check):

______ 1 parent

______ 2 parents

______ grandparents

______ other relatives

______ foster family

______ friends

______ other who? ___________________________

How many brothers, sisters, stepbrothers, or stepsisters do you have who are 16 or older (circle)?

0 1 2 3 4 5

How many are still in high school (circle)?

0 1 2 3 4 5

How many dropped out (circle)?

0 1 2 3 4 5

How many went to the military, got a job, or went to college/tech school (circle)?

0 1 2 3 4 5

Do you know anyone who dropped out of high school (circle)? No / Yes

If yes, why did they quit? ______________________________

____

If yes, what is that person doing now? ______________________

____

What do you think of their decision? ________________________

____

What is the biggest problem that you had at HCHS this year?

Who helped you with this problem? What did they do?

Please circle the number that best describes how much you agree with each statement.

1 - I do not agree at all!
2 - I only agree a little
3 - I agree some of the time
4 - I agree most of the time
5 - I definitely agree!

1	2	3	4	5	The Board and Superintendent have done things for the good of children, not for their own benefit.
1	2	3	4	5	Women are respected as public leaders in this county.

1 2 3 4 5 Local people can make the best decisions about how to run our school, not the state officials.

1 2 3 4 5 Experts should make most decisions about how to run the schools.

1 2 3 4 5 If you vote for someone, you can't complain about what they do when elected.

1 2 3 4 5 I trust the principals to make the best decisions that will be for the good of the children in this county.

1 2 3 4 5 If a teacher had said I did something wrong, my parents would stand up for me first and foremost, not the teacher.

1 2 3 4 5 If I got in trouble at school, I would get in trouble at home too.

Some people say "people here just don't care (about education)." Is this true?

Give an example of a specific time that you felt **unwelcome** in a teacher's class or at school. If it was something someone said, what did they say to you?

Give an example of a specific time that you felt **welcome** in a teacher's class or at school. If it was something someone said, what did they say to you?

Please circle the number that best describes how much you agree with each statement.

1 - I do not agree at all!
2 - I only agree a little
3 - I agree some of the time
4 - I agree most of the time
5 - I definitely agree!

---

1 2 3 4 5 All children are treated equally in our schools, no matter who their parents are or how much money they have.

1 2 3 4 5 Teachers and principals want elementary school parents to be involved.

1 2 3 4 5 Teachers and principals want high school parents to be involved.

1 2 3 4 5 Most elementary school parents want to be involved in their child's education and in school activities.

1 2 3 4 5 Most high school parents want to be involved in their child's education and in school activities.

1 2 3 4 5 If enough people want to change something in the schools, we can do it.

1 2 3 4 5 Ordinary people used to have more roles and be more important when we had small schools.

1	2	3	4	5	Site-based councils have given more and different people the chance to have a significant influence on decisions.
1	2	3	4	5	If I have a concern, I feel comfortable going to talk to a principal or that teacher about it.
1	2	3	4	5	We should leave it to the school personnel (principals, teachers) to set school policies and programs.

1	2	3	4	5	All children can achieve at high levels.
1	2	3	4	5	The public schools are too liberal.
1	2	3	4	5	I am satisfied with the achievement levels of our schools in this county.
1	2	3	4	5	If a young woman gets married, she should stay in high school.
1	2	3	4	5	I hope that my children will have more education that I do.
1	2	3	4	5	All young people should finish high school.
1	2	3	4	5	Our schools are good enough for us.
1	2	3	4	5	If a young man gets married, he should quit high school.
1	2	3	4	5	Getting an education is more important today than it was twenty years ago.
1	2	3	4	5	Better schools will help bring jobs to this area.
1	2	3	4	5	The kind of person you are is more important than what diploma or degree you have.
1	2	3	4	5	If a young woman becomes a parent she should quit high school.
1	2	3	4	5	Having a good education can help you overcome having the wrong family name or being from the wrong place.
1	2	3	4	5	Most young people can finish high school.
1	2	3	4	5	If a young man becomes a parent he should stay in high school.
1	2	3	4	5	Everyone needs to continue learning through out their life.

What was the **most fun** activity/ class/ event that you participated in this year? Why would you recommend this to another student?

Do you **want to** finish high school (circle)? No / Yes

Do you think that you **will** finish high school (circle)? No / Yes
Why is this?

The thing that makes me most want to quit school is:

What do **adults** want you to do after high school? (check one for each person)

	my father	my mother	my teachers
does not apply (no father/mother)	______	______	______
college	______	______	______
full-time job	______	______	______
trade/tech school	______	______	______
military	______	______	______
They don't care	______	______	______
I don't know	______	______	______

After high school I **really hope** to:

(put a 1 by your first choice, a 2 by your second choice)

go to a 4 year college ______
have a full-time job ______
go to 2 year/trade/tech school ______
join the military ______
I don't care ______
I don't know ______
draw ______

After high school, I **probably will**: (put a 1 by your first choice, a 2 by your second choice)

go to a 4 year college ______
have a full-time job ______
go to 2 year/trade/tech school ______
join the military ______
I don't care ______
I don't know ______
draw ______

When I am 25 I hope that I (check **all** that apply)

______have finished high school/GED

______have a baby

______am married

______live at home

______have finished college

______have finished 2 year/tech school

______am in graduate/professional school

______am on the draw

______am in the military

______have a full-time job

______have a part-time job

______live in Hickory county

______live in this area

______live somewhere else

Please circle the number that best describes how much you agree with each statement.

1 - I do not agree at all!
2 - I only agree a little
3 - I agree some of the time
4 - I agree most of the time
5 - I definitely agree!

1	2	3	4	5	People from our county should always be hired over outsiders.
1	2	3	4	5	Through KERA we have received needed help from outsiders.
1	2	3	4	5	If two people are equally qualified, the one from this county should be hired over the outsider.
1	2	3	4	5	We should only make changes if they can fit our situation here, whether they are required or not.
1	2	3	4	5	If you want to get a job here you have to have the right political connections.
1	2	3	4	5	KERA has brought too much interference by outsiders.
1	2	3	4	5	Everyday people have enough opportunity to set our own priorities regarding the schools.
1	2	3	4	5	We should adopt required changes so that we can be in the forefront of change.
1	2	3	4	5	If changes worked somewhere else, they will probably work here too.

Did you go to ESS in **elementary school** (circle)? No / Yes

Did you go to ESS/tutoring in **high school** (circle)? No / Yes

If you ever went to ESS/tutoring, why did you go? (check **all** that apply)

______to pass a class
______to have a place to do my homework
______to make up an assignment
______to work better with other people
______because my parents wanted me to
______to learn something new
______to raise my grade
______to get help with a problem
______because I wanted to
______ my teacher wanted me to
______to be with friends

If you did **not** ever go to ESS/tutoring, why didn't you go? (check **all** that apply)

______I didn't have a ride
______I have an after school job
______it lasts too long/takes too much time
______its just the same as class
______none of my friends go
______doesn't matter if I fail a class
______after school sports/activities
______I need child care

If the computer lab were open **before** school would you use it (circle)? No / Yes

If the computer lab were open **after** school would you use it (circle)? No / Yes

If you could learn about ACT/SAT prep would you come to ESS/tutoring? No / Yes

Pick the two best days for after school tutoring for you (check **two**).

______Monday ______Tuesday ______Wednesday
______Thursday ______Friday

Please circle the number that best describes how much you agree with each statement.
1 - I do not agree at all!
2 - I only agree a little
3 - I agree some of the time
4 - I agree most of the time
5 - I definitely agree!

1	2	3	4	5	If you want to have a good job you have to leave this county.
1	2	3	4	5	In this area, if a person wants to work he or she can find a job.
1	2	3	4	5	In order to get the best jobs you have to have the right name, be from the right place, or have the right connections.
1	2	3	4	5	Welfare causes a poor attitude about the importance of getting an education.

1	2	3	4	5	People in Hickory county are as smart as people elsewhere.
1	2	3	4	5	If a young person has ambition he or she should leave this county.
1	2	3	4	5	It is an important thing to have a personal connection of some kind before you hire a person.
1	2	3	4	5	Its harder to get a job if you have the "wrong" family name or come from the wrong place.
1	2	3	4	5	I would rather stay in this county, even if it means less money or a job that I don't like as much.
1	2	3	4	5	Most people on welfare want to work.
1	2	3	4	5	I feel that teachers and principals will look down on me because of who I am.
1	2	3	4	5	I prefer that my children live in this county (or close by) when they grow up.
1	2	3	4	5	Certain families control the best jobs in this county.

The career/job that I would **most** like to have is: ______________________________

____

The career/job that I would also like to have as a second choice is:______________

____

How did you find out about these careers/jobs?

Would you like more help and information about jobs and careers(circle)? No / Yes

What was the best part of freshman orientation?

How could we improve freshman orientation?

Would it have been more helpful if the teachers were in the classroom on the day that you came for freshman orientation? No / Yes

What did you wish that you had known before you came to HCHS?

What advice would you give a younger cousin coming to KC next year?

If you could have two new things at HCHS next year, what would you want?

1.

2.

Check the highest level of education that

	your father has	your mother has	the person you live with has
does not apply (no father/mother/other)	__	______	______
less than 9th grade	______	______	______
some high school, did not graduate	______	______	______
high school graduate	______	______	______
some college, no degree	______	______	______
2 year/tech/ associate degree	______	______	______
bachelor's/ 4 year college	______	______	______
graduate or professional	______	______	______

Your name ______________________________ Phone ______________

Address ____

✓✓✓ COMMUNITY GROUP SURVEY ✓✓✓

NOTE: This survey was never successfully administered. See the text for an explanation and analysis of stakeholder apprehension.. Spacing has been collapsed for this bound format.

You are invited to share your ideas in a research study on KERA and community engagement with schooling in this county. I am particularly interested in how different groups within the community view the meaning of education in this local setting. This is a version of a survey that has been conducted with many other stakeholder groups throughout the county; therefore your results will add to a growing and significant data base. The insights gained will be used not only for the purpose of completing my dissertation at Stanford University, but also to identify local priorities and improve regional educational programs.

These surveys are confidential. Every question on this survey has been tested and retained because it will yield meaningful insights, therefore it is important that you fill out this survey as completely as possible. However, you do not have to answer any question that you do not wish to answer. Furthermore, participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide not to participate, it will not have a negative effect on your grade.

If you have any questions - or would like to make further comments - please feel free to contact me at 641 Laurel St. Apt 5 Hickory KY 40906 or (606) 586-9771.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to include your class in this survey!

Maureen Porter

Sex (circle): Male Female Age________

My high school(s) was/were:______________________________
in _______________ County

Place(s) where you did your field work (please list location and type of school):

____

The greatest problem facing people and their schools in this county/area is:

Why has this problem endured?

Who currently has the power to solve this problem?

Who *should* play a role in solving this problem? What would it take for this person/ group/ institution to make a difference?

Please circle the number that best describes how much you agree with each statement. (NOTE: If you feel that things have changed significantly in the recent past and therefore cannot circle one single number, *circle* the number that corresponds to how things are now, and *underline* the number for how things were in the past.)

1 - I do not agree at all!
2 - I only agree a little
3 - I agree some of the time
4 - I agree most of the time
5 - I definitely agree!

1	2	3	4	5	The Board and Superintendent have done things for the good of children, not for their own benefit.
1	2	3	4	5	Women are respected as public leaders in this county.
1	2	3	4	5	Local people can make the best decisions about how to run our school, not the state officials.
1	2	3	4	5	Experts should make most decisions about how to run the schools.
1	2	3	4	5	If you vote for someone, you can't complain about what they do when elected.
1	2	3	4	5	I trust the principals to make the best decisions that will be for the good of the children in this county.
1	2	3	4	5	If a teacher had said that my child had done something wrong, I would stand up for my child first and foremost, not the teacher.
1	2	3	4	5	If my child got in trouble at school, he/she would get in trouble at home too.

Some people say "people here just don't care (about education)." Is this true?

Is this true for some people more than others? Why?

In recent years, most parents of (high) school age children have not felt welcome to speak out about their concerns about the schools. Has this been the case for people you know?

Why do you think that they have had this experience? Give a specific example of a time that they/you were made to feel (un) welcome to speak their/your opinion or talk about needed changes.

Please circle the number that best describes how much you agree with each statement.

1 - I do not agree at all!
2 - I only agree a little
3 - I agree some of the time
4 - I agree most of the time
5 - I definitely agree!

1	2	3	4	5	All children are treated equally in our schools, no matter who their parents are or how much money they have.
1	2	3	4	5	Teachers and principals want elementary school parents to be involved.
1	2	3	4	5	Teachers and principals want high school parents to be involved.
1	2	3	4	5	Most elementary school parents want to be involved in their child's education and in school activities.
1	2	3	4	5	Most high school parents want to be involved in child's education and in school activities.
1	2	3	4	5	If enough people want to change something in the schools, we can do it.
1	2	3	4	5	Ordinary people used to have more roles and be more important when we had small schools.
1	2	3	4	5	Site-based councils have given more and different people the chance to have a significant influence on decisions.
1	2	3	4	5	If I have a concern, I feel comfortable going to talk to a principal or that teacher about it.
1	2	3	4	5	We should leave it to the school personnel to set school policies and programs.

Have you noticed any changes in the schools that you would attribute to KERA? Why would you say that these are due to KERA?

Have you noticed any changes in people's attitudes about the schools that you would attribute to KERA? Why would you say that these are due to KERA?

Please circle the number that best describes how much you agree with each statement.

1 - I do not agree at all!
2 - I only agree a little
3 - I agree some of the time
4 - I agree most of the time
5 - I definitely agree!

1	2	3	4	5	All children can achieve at high levels.
1	2	3	4	5	The public schools are too liberal.
1	2	3	4	5	I am satisfied with the achievement levels of our schools in this county.

1 2 3 4 5 If a young woman gets married, she should stay in high school.

1 2 3 4 5 I hope that my children will have more education that I do.

1 2 3 4 5 All young people should finish high school.

1 2 3 4 5 Our schools are good enough for us.

1 2 3 4 5 If a young man gets married, he should quit high school.

1 2 3 4 5 Getting an education is more important today than it was twenty years ago.

1 2 3 4 5 Better schools will help bring jobs to this area.

1 2 3 4 5 The kind of person you are is more important than what diploma or degree you have.

1 2 3 4 5 If a young woman becomes a parent she should quit high school.

1 2 3 4 5 Having a good education can help you overcome having the wrong family name or being from the wrong holler.

1 2 3 4 5 Most young people can finish high school.

1 2 3 4 5 If a young man becomes a parent he should stay in high school.

1 2 3 4 5 Everyone needs to continue learning through out their life.

What have you learned about education and schooling that makes you *want to* become a teacher in the public schools in this area?

What have you learned about education and schooling that makes you *hesitant to* become a teacher in the public schools in this area?

Where would you like to get a teaching job? (Rank them #1 the most, #2 next, etc. Put a 0 in any blank where you would definitely *not* like to teach.)

____________in a big city (200,000 plus)
____________my home county name of county:____________________
____________any county in this area
____________in a rural area
____________in a state other than Kentucky
____________in a town of about 20,000
____________in another country

Do you think that you will be able to get a job as a teacher in the place that you desire?

Which factors will make it easier/harder for your to get that job? How do you know this?

Please list any relative that you have/had who were/are educators.

Please circle the number that best describes how much you agree with each statement.

1 - I do not agree at all!
2 - I only agree a little
3 - I agree some of the time
4 - I agree most of the time
5 - I definitely agree!

1	2	3	4	5	People from our county should always be hired over outsiders.
1	2	3	4	5	Through KERA we have received needed help from outsiders.
1	2	3	4	5	If two people are equally qualified, the one from this county should be hired over the outsider.
1	2	3	4	5	We should only make changes if they can fit our situation here, whether they are required or not.
1	2	3	4	5	If you want to get a job here you have to have the right political connections.
1	2	3	4	5	KERA has brought too much interference by outsiders.
1	2	3	4	5	Everyday people have enough opportunity to set our own priorities regarding the schools.
1	2	3	4	5	We should adopt required changes so that we can be in the forefront of change.
1	2	3	4	5	If changes worked somewhere else, they will probably work here too.
1	2	3	4	5	If you want to have a good job you have to leave this county.
1	2	3	4	5	In this area, if a person wants to work he or she can find a job.
1	2	3	4	5	In order to get the best jobs you have to have the right name, be from the right place, or have the right connections.
1	2	3	4	5	Welfare causes a poor attitude about the importance of getting an education.
1	2	3	4	5	People in Hickory county are as smart as people elsewhere.
1	2	3	4	5	If a young person has ambition he or she should leave this county.
1	2	3	4	5	It is an important thing to have a personal connection of some kind before you hire a person.
1	2	3	4	5	Its harder to get a job if you have the "wrong" family name or come from the wrong place.
1	2	3	4	5	I would rather stay in this county, even if it means less money or a job that I don't like as much.
1	2	3	4	5	Most people on welfare want to work.

1	2	3	4	5	I feel that school personnel will look down on me because of who I am.
1	2	3	4	5	I prefer that my children live in this county (or close by) when they grow up.
1	2	3	4	5	Certain families control the best jobs in this county.

As you have time:
Dream up a PTA project. What have you always wanted the PTA to do? Who would be involved? What would you do? What would the goals be?

RESULTS OF THE VARIOUS VERSIONS OF FACULTY SURVEY II

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR FOUR RESPONSE GROUPS: TEACHERS, INVOLVED PARENTS, ADULT GED STUDENTS, AND FRESHMEN OF THE CLASS OF 1999

Participants were asked to respond to 56 statements The five choices on the Likert scale were:

1= I do not agree at all!
2= I only agree a little
3= I agree some of the time
4= I agree most of the time
5= I definitely agree!

"Teachers" include all faculty, administrators, and certified staff (Youth Service Center, Special Education, Librarians). They were surveyed at a regular, weekly faculty meeting. Absent or never-attending category members were given a survey personally with proper explanation. Those who did not return the survey at the meeting or shortly after receiving it were sent a note and personally approached [repeatedly, if necessary], hence the high response rate.

"Involved Parents" include those who regularly attended at least two of the following groups: band boosters. athletic boosters, the Parent-Teacher Association, site-based meetings, site-based council subcommittees, parent-teacher conferences (if held), public forums. These groups are very small and largely self-overlapping samples.

Adult GED class students include adults mostly in the range of 25-35 years, who have returned to work on computer literacy skills in a school district-sponsored evening program. Although their participation in the program was voluntary, they were under the impression that doing so would enhance their ability to be considered for future welfare benefits. Conversely, given the legislative emphasis on redesigning welfare-to-work programs, refusal to participate might jeopardize their benefits in the uncertain future. The two classes surveyed were, together, about 70 % women.

The first year survey was adminstered to first-time freshmen who had been randomly selected. It was given over two periods during school hours. A second round of administration was necessary in order to allow a second chance for those students who were initially apprehensive about being called to the library, or whose teachers initially refused to let them participate. The survey was conducted in March; over ten percent of the class had dropped out already. Those students who could be located as still living in the region were contacted, (3) but I was unsuccessful in reaching them to do interviews. Several of the survey takers indicated to me and/or on the survey that they intended to leave school as soon as they turned 16 in the summer; 2 boys of the 3 (all males) who so indicated were unable to read and write well enough to complete the survey. Although I offered to read it to them privately, they were so discouraged and ready to leave that none accepted the offer. In the course of administering the survey to the freshmen in general, I did need to explain the word, "liberal" define "ACT" tests, and introduce the role of "site-based councils" for the minority who did not know what these were.

Responses to Various Forms of the Faculty Survey II

Question[1]	Teachers n=61 (92.4 % resp. rate)			Involved Parents n=18 (81.8 % resp. rate)			Adult GED Students n=14 (70.0 % resp. rate)			Freshmen, Class of 1999 n= 59 (73.8 % resp. rate)		
	Mean	SD	Mode	Mean	SD	Mode	Mean	SD	Mode	Mean	SD	Mode
1. The Board and Superintendent have done things for the good of children, not for their own benefit.	3.15	1.22	3	2.33	1.25	1	3.07	0.96	3	2.75	0.86	3
2. Women are respected as public leaders in this county.	**2.74**	**1.03**	**3**	**2.50**	**1.07**	**2**	**2.29**	**1.39**	**1**	**3.35**	**1.16**	**3,4**
3. Local people can make the best decisions about how to run our schools, not the state officials.	3.49	1.05	3	3.17	0.96	3	3.36	1.23	2	3.17	1.13	3
4. Experts should make most decisions about how to run the schools.	**2.98**	**1.01**	**3**	**3.06**	**0.94**	**3**	**2.71**	**1.22**	**3**	**2.71**	**1.14**	**3**
5. If you vote for someone, you can't complain about what they do when elected.	1.84	1.27	1	2.22	1.31	1	2.79	1.82	1	2.59	1.43	1
6. I trust the principals to make the best decisions that will be for the good of the children in this county.	**3.25**	**1.01**	**3,4**	**2.94**	**0.85**	**3**	**3.29**	**0.88**	**3**	**3.10**	**1.30**	**3**
7. If a teacher says that a child had done something wrong, the parents would stand up for the child first and foremost, not the teacher.	2.95	1.33	3	2.00	1.33	1	3.07	1.22	3	3.21	1.18	3

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[1] The footnotes reflect the wording used in the adult GED students' questionnaire. On a select set of questions, the wording varied depending on the position of the respondent relative to the question , i.e. "a child" (teachers) vs. "my child," (adults, parents) or "I" (students)

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8. If my child got in trouble at school, he/she would get in trouble at home too.	4.07	1.23	5	4.78	0.53	5	4.29	0.96	5	3.91	1.26	5
9. All children are treated equally in our schools, no matter who their parents are or how much money they have.	2.58	1.29	1	2.33	1.25	1	1.46	0.75	1	2.10	1.37	1
10. Teachers and principals want elementary school parents to be involved.	3.64	1.03	3	3.41	0.97	4	3.79	1.32	5	3.69	1.06	3,4,5
11. Teachers and principals want high school parents to be involved.	4.03	0.77	4	3.78	1.13	5	3.86	1.36	5	3.74	0.97	4
12. Most elementary school parents want to be involved in their child's education and in school activities.	3,05	0,95	3	2.83	1.07	2	3.93	0.93	4,5	3.64	1.05	4
13. Most high school parents want to be involved in their child's education and in school activities.	2.52	0.93	2	2.22	0.85	2	3.60	1.02	3	3.03	1.02	3
14. If enough people want to change something in the schools, we can do it.	4.00	1.09	5	4.83	0.37	5	4.43	1.05	5	3.78	1.15	4,5
15. Ordinary people used to have more roles and be more important when we had small schools.	3.27	1.19	4,3	3.28	1.37	4	4.14	0.91	5	3.33	0.92	3
16. Site-based councils have given more and different people the chance to have a significant influence on decisions.	3.20	1.22	3	3.94	1.43	5	3.46	1.60	5	3.42	1.06	4
17. If I have a concern, I feel comfortable going to talk to a principal or another teacher about it.	3.67	1.15	5,3	4.50	0.83	5	3.57	0.98	3	2.78	1.23	3
18. People should leave it to the school personnel to set school policies and programs.	2.87	1.22	3	2.06	1.27	1	2.15	1.03	1,3	2.99	1.37	2
19 All children can achieve at high levels.	3.49	1.24	4	3.00	1.20	2,4	2.92	1.21	3	3.57	1.12	4
20. The public schools are too liberal.	3.48	1.35	4	2.83	1.30	3	3.43	1.18	3	2.79	0.92	3

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21. I am satisfied with the achievement levels of our schools in this county.	2.28	1.01	2	1.78	1.08	1	2.23	1.19	1	2.60	1.22	2
22 If a young woman gets married, she should stay in high school.	4.30	1.06	5	4.44	0.83	5	4.64	0.72	5	4.57	0.87	5
23. I hope that my children will have more education than I do.	4.64	0.82	5	4.83	0.69	5	5.00	0.00	5	4.57	0.89	5
24. All young people should finish high school.	4.75	0.72	5	4.89	0.31	5	5.00	0.00	5	4.69	0.72	5
25. Our schools are good enough for us.	2.44	1.08	3	1.82	1.29	1	2.79	1.21	2	3.47	1.19	4
26. If a young man gets married, he should quit high school.	1.36	1.01	1	1.11	0.31	1	1.64	1.29	1	1.58	1.20	1
27. Getting an education is more important today than it was twenty years ago.	4.69	0.71	5	4.56	1.12	5	4.36	1.23	5	4.60	0.90	5
28. Better schools will help bring jobs to this area.	4.32	1.16	5	4.44	1.07	5	3.86	1.12	5	4.07	1.16	5
29. The kind of person you are is more important than what diploma or degree you have.	3.64	1.12	3	3.94	1.13	5	3.36	1.39	5	3.49	1.11	3, 4
30. If a young woman becomes a parent she should quit high school.	1.46	0.98	1	1.44	0.96	1	1.79	1.15	1	1.67	1.21	1
31. Having a good education can help you overcome having the wrong family name or being from the wrong place.[2]	3.85	1.33	5	4.29	1.32	5	3.36	1.63	5	3.00	1.16	3, 4
32. Most young people can finish high school.	4.52	0.78	5	4.94	0.23	5	4.57	0.62	5	4.51	0.75	
33. If a young man becomes a parent he should stay in high school.	4.51	0.98	5	4.83	0.37	5	4.36	1.11	5	4.57	0.77	5
34. Everyone needs to continue learning throughout their life.	4.89	0.45	5	5.00	0.00	5	5.00	0.00	5	4.66	0.71	5

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[2] Several respondents responded strongly to the use of the phrases "wrong family name," and/or "wrong place." Two teachers refused to answer the question on the basis that they objected to the phrase; one even quit answering the survey after the phrase was used again, stating, "I don't like these questions!"

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35. People from our county should always be hired over outsiders.	2.62	1.23	3	1.72	1.10	1	4.21	1.08	5	2.97	1.25	3
36. Through KERA we have received needed help from outsiders.	**2.85**	**1.04**	**3**	**3.21**	**1.32**	**3**	**2.71**	0.96	3	3.40	0.81	3,4
37. If two people are equally qualified, the one from this county should be hired over the outsider.	3.80	1.40	5	3.60	0.80	3,4	4.14	1.19	5	2.98	1.51	1,3,5
38. We should only make changes if they can fit our situation here, whether they are required or not.	**2.86**	**1.37**	**3**	**2.00**	**1.21**	**1**	**2.57**	**1.18**	1	3.33	1.06	3
39. If you want to get a job here, you have to have the right political connections.	2.98	1.21	3	3.44	1.34	3,5	3.93	1.44	5	2.96	1.12	3
40. KERA has brought too much interference by outsiders.	**2.81**	**1.22**	**2**	**1.61**	**1.01**	**1**	**3.00**	**1.00**	**3**	2.79	1.35	3
41. Everyday people have enough opportunity to set our own priorities regarding the schools.	2.93	0.87	3	2.29	0.89	2	2.93	1.22	3	3.24	0.93	3
42. We should adopt required changes so that we can be in the forefront of change.	**3.61**	**1.06**	**4**	**3.24**	**1.48**	**4**	**3.57**	0.73	3	3.28	1.06	3
43. If changes worked somewhere else, they will probably work here too.	2.81	1.07	2,3	3.11	1.15	3	3.00	1.00	3	3.33	0.99	3,4
44. If you want to have a good job you have to leave this county.	**2.85**	**1.19**	**3**	**2.65**	**1.03**	**3**	**3.71**	**1.33**	**4**	**3.29**	1.16	3
45. In this area, if a person wants to work he or she can find a job.	3.00	1.23	4	3.78	0.92	4	2.36	1.17	2	3.10	1.08	3
46. In order to get the best jobs you have to have the right name, be from the right place, or have the right connections.	**2.84**	**1.21**	**3**	**3.44**	1.17	3,4	4.29	0.96	5	3.31	1.29	3,4
47. Welfare causes a poor attitude about the importance of getting an education.	4.34	1.09	5	4.78	0.53	5	3.14	1.25	2,3	3.31	1.29	3,4
48. People in Hickory County are as smart as people elsewhere.	4.31	1.05	5	4.83	0.37	5	4.36	0.89	5	4.21	0.98	5

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49. If a young person has ambition he or she should leave this county.	2.71	1.22	3	1.88	1.11	1	2.71	1.22	3	3.19	1.04	3
50. It is an important thing to have a personal connection of some kind before you hire a person.	2.19	1.33	1	1.72	1.15	1	2.14	1.46	1	2.84	1.06	3
51. Its harder to get a job if you have the "wrong" family name or come from the wrong place.	2.91	1.26	3	3.18	1.10	3	3.86	1.12	5	3.14	1.25	3
52. I would rather stay in this county, even if it means less money or a job that I don't like as much.	2.88	1.51	1	3.53	1.19	4	2.71	1.44	3	2.37	1.29	1
53. Most people on welfare want to work.	2.14	1.00	2	1.47	0.70	1	2.86	1.51	1	2.70	1.29	3
54. I feel that school personnel will look down on me because of who I am.	2.05	1.40	1	1.76	1.31	1	2.93	1.28	2	2.48	1.24	1,3
55. I prefer that my children live in this county (or close by) when they grow up.	3.09	1.38	3	3.44	1.30	5	3.21	1.21	3	2.90	1.34	3
56. Certain families control the best jobs in this county.	3.40	1.34	5,3	3.94	1.35	5	4.57	0.90	5	3.53	1.09	3

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How well do you know HCHS and Hickory county profiles?

Initial Directions

Statistics are often used to describe a place and group of people. While numbers certainly cannot capture the feeling of what it is like to live somewhere nor can they depict how friendly a group of people are, they can be useful in profiling some aspects of a community. How well can you guess what Census and other data says about Hickory county? **Circle** what you think is the best answer under each question. The year that the data comes from is in parentheses behind the question.

Analysis

I conducted this "quiz" at a bleary spring faculty meeting. It was presented as a game, and players were told that there would be a prize for the most right (over 6). Modal responses from the faculty are on the left, the actual answers are on the right. The actual proportion distribution is below. An answer key was handed out to all teachers/staff as they turned their own "quiz" in. This met with great delight and a bit of consternation as people began to talk loudly about the official numbers and how far off most were. Only one person cheated by copying the actual statistics onto the form; the rest played this as a "game." The average number right out of ten was three.

What percentage of HCHS graduates go on to college (1990)?

Modal Faculty Response - 38.7% **Actual - 46.7%**

22.0%(22.0%) 32.1%(24.4%) 38.7% (43.9%) 46.7% (7.3%) 53.4% (2.4%)

What percent of 9th graders graduate from HCHS four years later (1990)?

Faculty - 45.6% and 52.7% **Actual - 52.7%**

41.3% (17.1) 45.6% (26.8) 52.7% (26.8) 57.0% (17.1) 64.3% (14.6)

What percent of the HCHS student body is on free (or reduced) lunch (1994)?

Faculty - 82.5% **Actual - 64.9%**

55.2% (2.4) 64.9% (12.2) 73.1% (14.6) 79.2% (22.0) 82.5% (53.7)

What percent of Hickory county children (3-18) live in a single parent household (1990)?

Faculty - 44.0 % **Actual - 22.9%**

12.9% (0) 22.9% (2.4) 32.1% (7.3) 44.0% (53.7) 54.8% (39.0)

Out of 120 Kentucky counties, Hickory ranks ---- in the rate of teen pregnancy (1994)?

Faculty - 118 or 120 **Actual - 117**

110 (17.1) 114 (17.1) 117 (17.1) 118 (24.4) 120 (24.4)

What percent of Hickory county children (3-18) have no parent in the labor force (this includes rates for single parent and multiple parent families) (1990)?

Faculty - 54.7% **Actual - 24.0%**

16.3% (0) 24.0% (4.88) 32.4% (22.0) 45.6% (36.6) 54.7% (39.0)

How many people are there in Hickory County (1990)?

Faculty - 34,112 **Actual - 29,676**

29,676 (7.3) 32,942(19.5) 34,112 (43.9) 37,991 (22.0) 40,012 (7.3)

What is the median family income in Hickory County (1990)?

Faculty - $12,776 **Actual - $15,412**

$8,875 (24.4) $10,421 (17.1) $12,776 (46.3) $15,412 (12.2) $18,369 (2.4)

When was Hickory county established (1993)?

Faculty -1799 **Actual - 1799**

1750 (12.2) 1786 (14.6) 1792 (12.2) 1799 (31.7) 1802 (29.3)

What is the average level of education for all Hickory Countians 18 and over (1990)?

Faculty - 8.3 Years **Actual - 8.3 years**

7.5 years (14.6) 8.3 years (43.9) 10.2 years (39.0) 11.5 years (4.9) 12.9 years (0)

The Superintendent Screening Committee is very interested in your input in the selection of the next superintendent of the Hickory County schools. Please complete the following survey.

We will use the results of the surveys to recommend the best candidates to the Board of Education.

Please return the surveys in the envelope provided by Friday, February 24th.

PART 1. Please circle the number that best describes how important each item is to you.

1 - not important at all
2 - I prefer it, but it's not necessary
3 - somewhat important
4 - very important
5 - absolutely necessary

ACADEMIC CREDENTIALS

1	2	3	4	5	doctorate degree
1	2	3	4	5	prior experience as a superintendent
1	2	3	4	5	curriculum knowledge
1	2	3	4	5	knowledge of 1990 Kentucky Education Reform Act
1	2	3	4	5	desire to implement KERA fully in Hickory County
1	2	3	4	5	knowledgeable educator with experience in implementing KERA

HUMAN RELATIONS SKILLS

1	2	3	4	5	is an ethical leader
1	2	3	4	5	is accessible to all employees and the public
1	2	3	4	5	knows and is sensitive to local cultural diversity
1	2	3	4	5	is able to inspire an interest in education
1	2	3	4	5	is adaptable to Hickory County lifestyle
1	2	3	4	5	works professionally with all people

LEADERSHIP QUALITIES

1	2	3	4	5	has the desire and ability to delegate authority
1	2	3	4	5	takes responsibility for own actions
1	2	3	4	5	makes decisions quickly based on their own criteria
1	2	3	4	5	has desire and ability to work with site-based committees
1	2	3	4	5	has high expectations for all students
1	2	3	4	5	creates a positive learning environment
1	2	3	4	5	is willing to expel disruptive students
1	2	3	4	5	involves staff in decision-making

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SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

1	2	3	4	5	can state a clear long-range mission for the schools
1	2	3	4	5	is "someone I can sit down with"
1	2	3	4	5	is able to work with community leaders
1	2	3	4	5	has open communication about objectives and changes
1	2	3	4	5	regularly visits the schools

What are the three **most important** characteristics of the best superintendent for Hickory County? Use items from the list above or your own ideas. Write the most important thing in #1, the second most important thing in #2, etc.

#1 ____________________

____

#2 ____________________

____

#3 ____________________

____

PART 2. Please answer the following questions. Feel free to use the back or to add another sheet if you need more space to write.

1. What are the three most important things that a superintendent does?

2. What is the greatest problem facing people and their schools in Hickory County? What should (or could) a superintendent do about this problem? Who else should play a role?

3. What question would you most like to ask, if you could interview the candidates? What do you think would be the best answer to your question?

4. Selecting a superintendent is not just about what candidates can do for us, it is also about what we have to offer them. What do you think that a superintendent should know about schools in Hickory County?

A SPECIAL NOTE:

There will be an opportunity for everyone who has additional input - whether a district employee or not - to share their views at the public forum to be held on Monday, February 20th at 7 p.m. in the Hickory High School Library. Please join us there!

Data from this survey will also be used by Maureen Porter of Stanford University in a research study on schools and KERA in Hickory County. No one's names will be used in the final report or used by the Screening Committee. If you have any other questions or concerns, please call 546-9771 or 546-9323.

**** THANK YOU VERY MUCH! ****

SUPERINTENDENT SCREENING COMMITTEE

PUBLIC FORUM SUMMARY

February 20, 1995
7 p.m. Hickory High Library

In addition to four members of the committee and the secretary, thirty-seven people including two additional Board members (Bargo and Mills) were present. Twenty-four were employees of the district and 13 were not. Only five people initially indicated that they would, or probably would, like to speak, although more did speak as the evening progressed. Four boys, aged 2 to 10, from four different families were also present.

Mr. Newmann gave an introduction of members and the secretary and stated that it is "well defined in the law how these people are chosen." The committee representatives have been working hard since December 5 and all meetings have been open up to this point. Fourteen hours of meaningful discussions culminated in the survey that he showed participants. Fifteen combined hours were logged in putting the survey together and getting it mailed out. He explained how parents and community members and students will be able to get involved. Later, he also stated that people should feel free to take and distribute public surveys.

Two letters were read aloud by the Chair. Both authors were present and were acknowledged.

Frequently Mentioned Criteria for the Superintendent

See the attached sheet.

additional ideas:

the person chosen has to be the best for the children of Hickory County

"a superintendent that loves all children including handicap and put children's financial and physical needs first"

'we do not want or need a political superintendent" - v public forum

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"we want a superintendent that wants the parents and children to be part of the school criteria"

it's hard to go on to compete with people from other areas if the schools here are inadequate and low achieving

(the superintendent should realize that) "achievement does not have anything to do with what holler they came out of or how many illiterate ancestors there are on their family tree"

there should be support for writing the entire year - not just a concern for test scores

my first impression was to get someone with a Ph.D. and not settle for anyone less (but then this person thought of the most intelligent person she knew and decided that that might not be a valid criteria) - more important is someone who you can look up to and respect

spunky

"someone who can light fires under us"

someone who works to build grassroots support and empower others

someone excited about their job

someone who can pull us out of the muck, pull us out of the rut vs. bog us down in the mud

treats every child fairly, no matter where the school is located

open line of communication - not tell you that they know it all!

the superintendent MUST be involved and visible

the superintendent should not intimidate you, and "not treat you like you are the village idiot"

"make sure the abuse (of children) - these problems get stopped before they get worser"

someone willing to remove teachers who are not doing their job, or who are abusing their position

support KERA (even if not fully agree with it) A) "because it is the law and we are being held accountable" and B) because you might like it once you give it a fair chance - it might really work

Concerns and Hopes for the Process

"The committee should take its mission very seriously - the people of the county are not going to settle for anything less than an excellent job."

"this is turning point in our county"

people expressed their support for and appreciation of all the extensive effort the committee has put out in order to really give stakeholders a real voice

keep trying- " the War against Apathy can be won somehow!"

the committee needs to find more ways to have the public survey made available to more people who might like to complete one

"What makes the Board more qualified than the committee to choose the final person (if they've done all this background work)?"

if the committee gives the Board three unranked names, "you might as well pick one out of the hat"

"As far as my children are concerned, this is the most important decision that will affect my children's lives"

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SUPERINTENDENT SCREENING COMMITTEE
REPORT OF ACTIONS TAKEN

Date	Action Item	Hours/Person(s)	
Early Dec.	Election of members of the screening committee		
Dec. 5	Meeting: selected chair and secretary, made decision to reach decisions through consensus, discussed the importance of confidentiality, expressed desire to involve the public fully through a forum and survey	2	5
Dec. 12	Meeting: discussed timeline, discussed training and roles of the committee and board	1.5	5
Jan. 9	KSBA consultant met with constituency groups. Principals - 9 in attendance Teachers - 13 in attendance Board members - 5 in attendance Certified Central Office - 12 in attendance		
	Meeting: chair met with KSBA consultant	1.5	1
Jan. 9	Meeting with KSBA consultant: discussed posting position and importance of involving the public, proposed timeline adjustments, discussed survey development	2	5
Jan. 19	Meeting: discussed budget and advertising, developed survey, planned for public forum	2	4
Feb. 2	Meeting: discussed criteria for candidates, hiring a consultant for the special needs of the committee, completed plans for public forum	1.5	5
Feb. 6	Meeting: worked on survey questions, discussed potential consultants	1.5	5
Feb. 13	Meeting: finalized district-wide survey, prepared forum, refined budget for survey and consultant	1	5
Feb. 16	Meeting with KSBA consultant: received application materials, discussed recommended practices for the process of background checks	2	5
Mid Feb.	Read application materials thoroughly (mean time per person)	4.3	5
Feb. 16-21	Prepared, collated, and distributed survey (Additional help was received from many volunteers)	20	5

Feb. 20	**Public Forum** 42 stakeholders shared their priorities and concerns and received information as to the screening process	1.75	4
Feb. 27	Meeting: prepared forms for doing telephone reference checks as well as written reference checks	1.5	4
Feb. 28	Meeting: analyzed results from returned **surveys**	2	4
Late Feb.	Conducted background checks, telephone interviews with both recommended and non-recommended references (mean)	3.5	5
Late Feb.	Completed analysis of returned written responses to background checks (mean time spent)	1.2	5
Feb.- Mar.	Independent meetings with stakeholders (mean)	2	5
Mar. 1	Meeting: analyzed results from returned surveys	1.5	4
Mar. 4 - 6	Analyzed results from returned surveys, identified priorities(Mean time per committee member)	13.25	5
Mar. 7	Meeting with own consultant: turned results of the survey into interview questions that incorporated stakeholders' concerns	3.75	4
Mar. 9	Meeting with KSBA consultant: addressed the appropriate timeline and how to conduct background checks	2	5
Mar. 15	Meeting with consultant: identified best responses to interview questions and draw up interview form	4	5
Mar. 20	Meeting: drafted the interview form that would be used, discussed probing follow-up questions	1.5	5
Mid Mar.	Chair contacted finalist candidates, arranged and confirmed interviews	2	1
Mar. 27	Meeting: divided up questions, reviewed best practices to be used during interviews	1.25	5
Apr. 1-6	**Interviews** of finalist candidates	28	5
Apr. 10	Meeting: met with board to exchange materials and share recommendations	1	5
	TOTAL NUMBER OF HOURS DEVOTED TO THOROUGH SCREENING PROCESS	519.75 Hours	

END OF YEAR FIELDWORK SURVEY

As the year comes close to an end, it is important for me to evaluate my research activities. In order to assess the impact that I have had and to better contextualize my year's work here, I ask your assistance in completing this questionnaire. Of course, the more candid your responses the better. I will certainly benefit from critical comments *both* positive and negative. Therefore, there are *no marks* on this paper that would identify the author, and I will not be collecting the questionnaire myself.

Please complete the following sentences:

(Feel free to use the back if you need more space.)

At the beginning of the year I thought she . . .

At the end of the year I think she . . .

The main concern that I have about her and her research is . . .

Please describe the positive impact, if any, that she has had.

Please describe the negative impact, if any, that she has had.

What personal attributes or characteristics (e.g. age, sex, personality, work ethic) have made a difference to you in how you perceive her and her intentions?

How is her work different from/the same as a state evaluation?